



**AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS
BETWEEN WOMEN'S DOMESTIC EMBROIDERY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
IN GUJARAT AND RAJASTAN**

MICHELE HARDY

**A Research Proposal Submitted To
The Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Alberta
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Clothing and Textiles**

June, 1992

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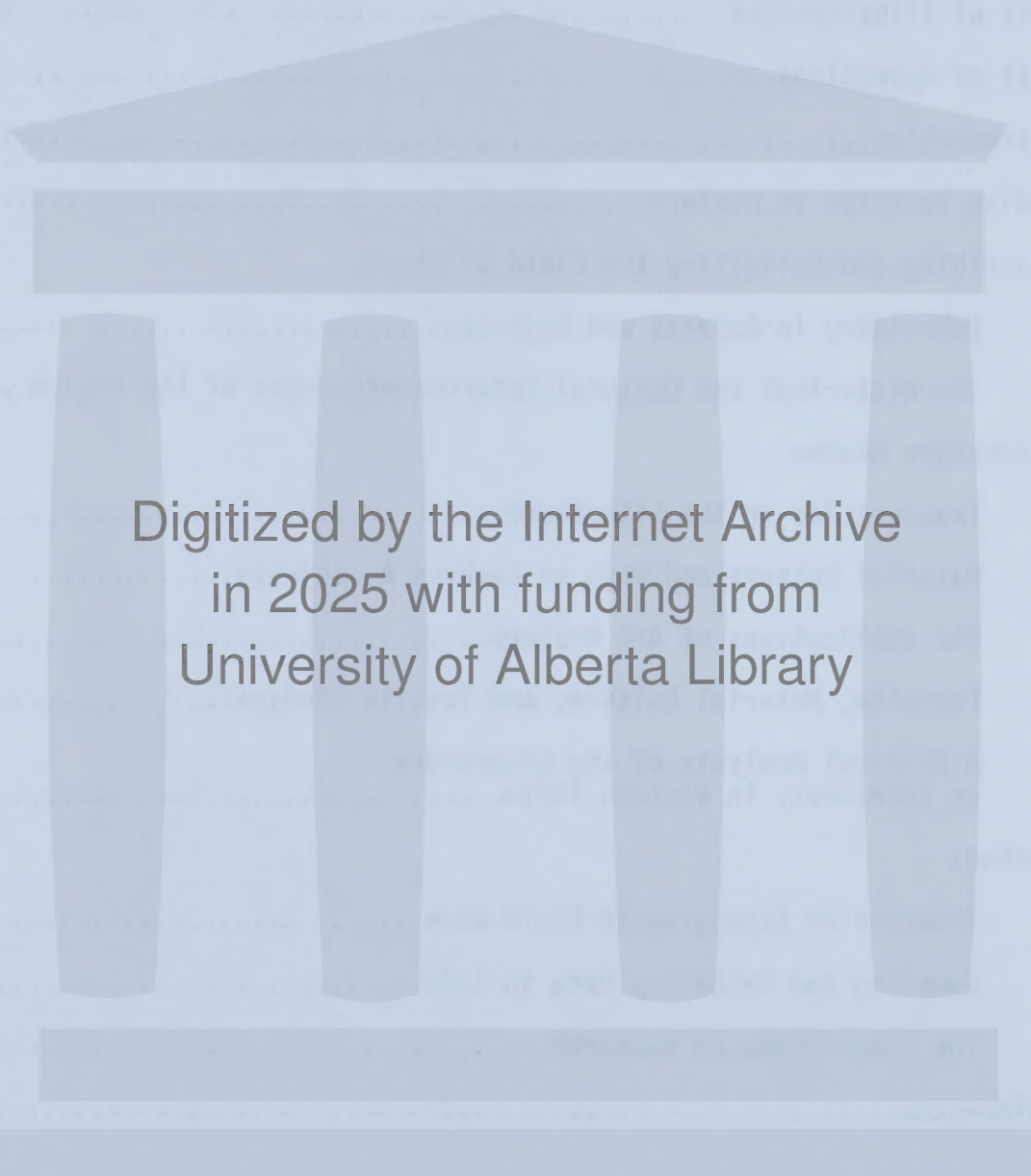
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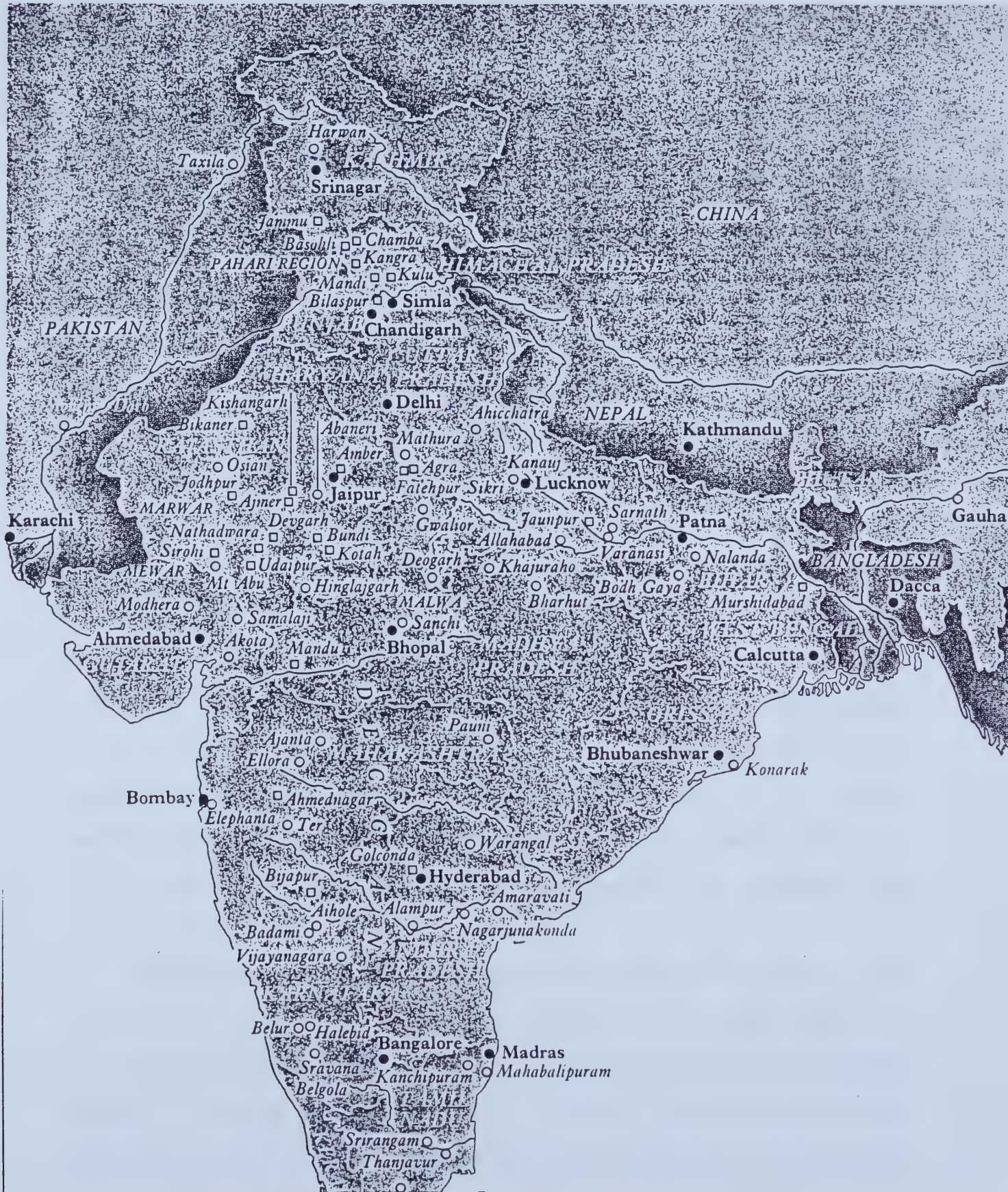


Illustration 1. Map of India Reprinted from Arts Council of Great Britain, 1982.

INTRODUCTION

When Irene Emery defines embroidery as decorative accessory stitches (Emery, 1980, p.232), she is describing it in plastic, objective terms. Embroidery is more than that however. It is, for example, temporal. It is "the embellishment of cloth by needlework" (Oxford Paperback Dictionary, 1983) and as such incorporates a multitude of stitches sometimes worked over a long period of time. Each stitch builds on the last until the pattern is complete; each stitch is part of the staccato rhythm that contributes to the larger rhythm of the design.

My review of the literature on Indian textiles revealed the fact that they are most often written about as if they were two dimensional. Indian textiles are largely described and classified without regard for their context. That they are produced in a specific time and place is largely ignored. They are treated as if they can be divorced from those who produce and use them-- as if they can be understood in terms of plastic qualities alone. While I recognize the importance of Emery's work and the study of aesthetics, I am aiming for a different, deeper understanding of embroidery. This understanding must include the study of the culture which produces them. I am therefore proposing a more expanded definition of embroidery-- one that adds depth through consideration of context and time.

Textiles have always held a special fascination for me and I have pursued their study in an intimate, physical way as an artist, and in a more abstract, cerebral way as a scholar. I have often been struck by the paradox of textiles in Western society. Intimately acquainted with them, we have the potential for a certain empathy or appreciation of them, at

the very least in a sensual way. As an artist I have been inspired by this shared experience of textiles. Accompanying my graduating exhibition of 1985 was the following statement:

A lot of the sewing required was done by hand and was quite repetitious. While my fingers were busy, my mind was free to wander. I remembered events and dreams from my childhood which became instilled within the work. More recently I began thinking about the historic women makers of traditional crafts: quilters, knitters, and rug hookers. Their work was often similarly repetitious; somehow their faith in the value of what they were doing and in the final outcome of the piece kept them going. I respect those women enormously, not simply as makers of beautiful crafts, but as real people who needed courage, endurance, and skill. What they made related directly to their lives.

In some ways I feel a part of their tradition and that is a wonderful, embracing feeling. Because of the decorative nature of my work, I cannot claim the directness of purpose of those women. What I can claim is a similar experience of making and dreaming; those things materializing in the work itself (Hardy, 1985).

This statement was prompted by another student's use of Maritime rug hooking. This student argued for a tradition of feminine aesthetics based on her research of hooked rugs. She claimed to understand hooked rugs and their symbolism which she reproduced as a series of oil paintings. I objected to the superficiality of her 'understanding' and to the fact that she had little, if any, experience of rug hooking. I felt her claims to shared experience, based on their femininity were untenable given the fact she had not produced rugs in a similar manner or in similar circumstances. I would add today that her experience of femininity undoubtedly differed from that of the historic rug hookers due to the progress of time. My claim to a shared experience was perhaps only slightly more justifiable given the fact that I am a textile artist who works in a not dissimilar medium. My interest in the experience of making hooked rugs, in their

purpose, who made them, and in which circumstances, developed into an interest in the whole context of textile production, and specifically the embroidery of Western India. This interest in context was born of my real experience of creating in time and space.

Whether or not my above claim of "similar experience" can be justified across time given a similar culture and craft, the intriguing question remains, what if we do not share a similar culture? Does a cross-cultural understanding of textiles share anything more than what is stored in the finger tips? What do women of India dream of and instill in their embroidery? What is the relationship between culture and textiles? What is the significance of women's domestic embroidery in India? Years of fieldwork and research are needed before I can approach answers to these questions. They lie, however, at the very heart of and direct the study I am about to propose.

The paradox of textiles in Western culture is that, despite our experiential knowledge of them, this familiarity renders them 'humble' and of little significance. The association between women and textiles has similarly contributed to the low value placed on them. This seems to be the case not only in Western society, but implicit in much of the literature on Indian textiles. There is, for example, an implicit bias in favour of 'sophisticated' textiles, that is, textiles associated with courtly traditions or trade and therefore, men. The textiles made by women for domestic use are largely ignored. Yet, the domestic embroidery of Western India is so pervasive, intricate, and distinct-- I can not help but wonder at this omission.

In the Literature Review I will demonstrate at length how superficial

and skewed the literature on embroidery of Western India is. My study has been developed in direct response to its perceived inadequacies. I propose, therefore, following data collection in Rajasthan and Gujarat, to explore the relationship between women's domestic embroidery and group membership.

The information available on embroidery types throughout Western India is far from comprehensive. While the embroidery of Gujarat has received more scholarly attention than that of Rajasthan, neither is adequately documented. The available studies seem to be either very general or specific. Judy Frater (1975), for example has worked extensively with the Rabari people of Kutch. Dongerkerry (1951) alternatively characterizes the local embroidery as either Kutchi or Kathiawar in style. Other sources suggest embroidery variations much more subtle and widespread (Elson, 1979). This survey will provide vital information as to the styles of embroidery being produced, where, and by whom.

The context of embroidery is largely ignored or poorly documented. For example, despite the fact that so many different ethnic groups live in Gujarat and Rajasthan, their relationship to their distinctive embroidery styles has rarely been considered. Similarly, the relationships between religion, caste, relative hierarchical position within the caste, and traditional/ actual occupations have not been consistently considered. These aspects, while far from providing the whole context of embroidery, may be significant. My survey will explore this aspect of the context of embroidery

Much of the literature seems to be influenced by Western notions of

Art History with its androcentric, Eurocentric perspective. Whether the omission of women and domestic embroidery from this literature can be attributed to that or more generally, to patriarchy, the fact remains that women are largely absent from the texts. Because the embroideries I am interested in are produced by women their role cannot be ignored. I will therefore document the embroiderers and their relationship to their families.

It should be clear that I am not interested in objects as ends in themselves, but as representatives of cultural information. The relationship between objects and the culture which produces them has been explored by many scholars. Heather Lechtman, for example has suggested that the techniques employed in pre-Columbian metallurgy reflect a certain approach to materials that is consistent with contemporary ideals and beliefs (Lechtman, 1975). Mary Helms notes similar correspondences between Cuna molas and pre-Columbian ceramics (Helms, 1981). Lawrence Hirschfeld has illustrated how molas play an integral role in local economics and politics through their physical production, and as means to absorb excess wealth (Hirschfeld, 1977). What connects these phenomena documented by Lechtman, Helms, and Hirschfeld are the patterns or rhythms that permeate both cultural objects and practices.

My study will provide documentation of women, domestic embroidery, and social organization in Rajasthan and Gujarat. It will also include documentation of other examples of material culture. In my final analysis, I propose to examine the accumulated written and photographic data for evidence of correlations. These will allow me to characterize the embroidery of various regions according to style, technique, and group

membership of the women who make them. This study will then make a valuable and original contribution to the study of Indian textiles. This study will also serve to orient further, more in depth studies.

I mentioned earlier that my aim is not only understand embroidery, but to understand the culture it is a part of. Just as the relationships between individual stitches creates an embroidered design, so the relationships between embroidery and social organization contribute to culture. By studying these I will begin to make sense of Indian culture.

INDIAN TEXTILES IN HISTORY

Indian textiles are characterized by their enormous variety of style and technique. Within this large country one can find the most humble hand spun woven cotton cloth, the most exquisite woven or embroidered paisley shawls, and intricate, double ikat silk 'patola' cloths. These variations are due, in part, to the geographic and cultural diversity of the country. Indian textiles are also influenced by a long history of migrations and invasions of various peoples including traders and merchants. These foreigners brought new ideas, designs, and demands to influence and challenge India's textile producers.

Because of the monsoons or rain bearing winds that arrive every summer, few textiles have been preserved that can be dated earlier than the seventeenth century A.D. (Olsen, 1965). Nevertheless some fragments have been discovered at Mohenjo Daro in the Indus Valley that have been dated to 1759 B.C. (Gittinger, 1982, p.16; Peebles, 1981,p.9; Silverstein, 1981, p.6; and Olsen, 1965, p.2).

Mohenjo Daro was one of a number of towns and villages that developed near the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. Other important sites which have been uncovered, include Harappa, also in Pakistan, Kalibangan, in Rajasthan, and Lothal, in Gujarat. Part of the Harappan or Indus Civilization (2300-1700 B.C.), these towns are characterized by a uniformity of town planning and material culture. Though essentially agricultural, the Indus Civilization is noted for trade with other parts of the ancient world, especially Mesopotamia (Knox, 1982, p.25). Gold, silver, and various semi-precious stones indicate trade with Afghanistan, Iran, Rajasthan, and Central Asia as well (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974).

A wharf has been discovered at Lothal, in Gujarat suggesting it was probably used as a port for trade with the Persian Gulf (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974).

Some of the other artifacts uncovered and attributed to the Indus Civilization include seals and statuettes depicting a seated male figure. Weightman has suggested that this figure is similar in many respects to the Hindu god Shiva and notes other similarities between classical Hinduism (500 B.C. - 500 A.D.) and the religious practices of the Indus Civilization (Weightman, 1985, p.194). Durrans points out that "the earlier Harappan or even pre-Harappan cultures may be credited with many of the cultural features which were perpetuated into the future" (Durrans, 1982, p.9). Weightman and Knox also note the predominance of terracotta mother goddesses, stone phalluses and indications of the worship of trees, animals, and water (Knox, 1982, p.34; and Weightman, 1985, p.194). Thus the importance of nature to India's textiles may date from this time.

The textile fragments discovered at Mohenjo Daro were preserved because they were attached to a silver vase and became impregnated with silver salts (Peebles, 1981, p.12). They clearly indicate the highly developed use of cotton as well as the earliest evidence of the use of mordants in India-- a secret kept from Europe until the seventeenth century (Peebles, 1981, p.9). The fact that cotton originated in the Sindhu Valley near the basin of the Indus River not far from Mohenjo Daro (Peebles, 1981, p.9; and Varadarajan, 1984, p.66), may be the reason for this high development. Unlike silk or wool, cotton is very difficult to dye fast. The Mohenjo Daro fragments indicate that mordants, which aid in

the bonding of dye to cotton, were already in use at this early date (Gittinger, 1982, p.19). Exactly when and where mordants were discovered remains a mystery. Other textile related discoveries at Mohenjo Daro include spindles, bronze needles, and dye vats (Peebles, 1981, p.9; and Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974).

The decline of the Indus Civilization after about 2000 B.C. (Knox, 1982, p.25) may have been hastened by the arrival of the Aryans, a group of Indo-European speaking peoples who moved into Iran, Afghanistan, and finally across northern India (Weightman, 1985, p.196). The Aryans brought their Vedic religion and were responsible for the oldest of all Indian religious texts, the Rig Veda (c. 1200 B.C.) (Knox, 1982, p.36). This remains a collection of hymns addressed to various gods or divine powers (devas) and used during the main official religious rites (Weightman, 1985, p.194). The Rig Veda and the last work of the Vedic religious corpus, the Upanishads (c. 700 B.C.), include the earliest written references to Indian textiles (Silverstein, 1981). They describe the universe as fabric woven by the gods and refer to cloth of gold which may have been similar to kimkhab¹. Vedic literature also contains references to embroidered garments and "pesaskari, the female weaver of embroidered garments" (in Dongerkerry, 1951, p.xii). The importance of stitching is furthermore suggested by this line from the Rig Veda:

With never-breaking needle may she sew her work, and
give a hero son most wealthy, meet for praise (in
Dongerkerry, 1951, p.10).

The Hindu religious books, the dharma sutras and the dharma shastras,

¹Kimkhab is a type of fabric which uses gold wrapped threads for supplementary weft patterning.

not only dictated how society should be organized but how Hindus should behave. Since this has implications for the development of India's social structure and textiles arts as both an economic and domestic pursuit, I will develop it further.

This code was founded on the belief that people are not the same and that their duties or ethics vary according to who they are and where they are in life (Weightman, 1985, p.197).

The four varnas emerged from the god Prajapati or the primeval man. Brahmins, associated with Prajapati's mouth, possessed magical or divine knowledge and were priests and teachers. The Kshatriya were associated with his arms and power. They were thus rulers and warriors. The Vaishyas arose from Prajapati's thighs and were associated with land and settlement. They were traditionally merchants and cultivators. From Prajapati's feet and therefore of the lowest rank, were the Shudras or menials who were bound to serve the other three higher, twice-born castes (Mandelbaum, 1970; and Weightman, 1985; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974). Those who did not fall within this four-fold system, possibly tribes unsubjected by the Aryans, were considered 'untouchables' and non-Hindus (Weightman, 1985, p.197). The most menial, and most ritually polluting occupations were reserved for this group. The varnas, Mandelbaum suggests, represent a general ideal of social relations, each contributing to the whole (Mandelbaum, 1970). The four groups are not distributed evenly, however, and may in any case have been "more like open classes than fixed social strata" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p.23). Jati² may, in fact,

²Mandelbaum notes the confusion that surrounds the terms caste and jati. Caste, originally from the Portuguese, refers to "the prevalent social order in India as well as the component groups within that order" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p.3). Jati, on the otherhand, comes from the Sanskrit root meaning 'to be born'. It

be more significant to caste functioning than the varnas (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974).

The principle groups of social interactions are families, lineages, jati-groups, jatis, village communities and other groups but not the varna categories (Mandelbaum, 1970, p.23).

One's jati is an endogamous group with certain shared behavioral attributes, a certain level of ritual pollution and purity, and a traditional occupation (Mandelbaum, 1970). In addition, hierarchy exists within each jati. This facilitates social organization by differentiating and defining interdependent groups (Pocock, 1973).

In terms of Indian textiles, certain groups have been associated with specific techniques. Leatherworking, for example, is abhorrent to most Hindus and so is the reserve of specific low-caste groups. The mochi are cobblers who developed the technique of mochi bharat, a type of chain stitch used to decorate initially leather, then cloth (Grewel & Grewel, 1988; Jaitly, 1985; and Irwin & Hall, 1973). The importance of caste to the continuity of craft skills is discussed by Varadarajan.

Because of the social environment of a caste dominated society within which the artisan operated, dilution in skill was minimal. At the same time an extraordinary degree of craft expertise was transmitted orally and by practical experience from generation to generation (Varadarajan, 1984, p.68).

Just as the ideal concept of varna differs from historical and present day practice, so too does Hinduism. At the high end is classical Hinduism with its emphasis on the major deities. In the urban areas the bhakti (loving devotion) tradition of Hinduism is pervasive. The most

commonly refers to one's birthright and is "an endogamous, hereditary social group that has a name and a combination of attributes" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p.14).

popular and widespread form of Hinduism is the "worship of local cult deities with vague associations of a major deity" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974, p.345) as in the worship of mother goddesses or mata (Pocock, 1973).

As Hinduism replaced Vedism, a new class of merchants emerged (Weightman, 1985, p.196). These merchants may well have been the ones to trade Indian cottons throughout the ancient world. Peebles notes, for example, that Babylonian tablets from the seventh century B.C., record the presence Indian textiles (Peebles, 1981, p.9). Other evidence indicates trade with the Persians and Greeks, the latter having visited from about 510 B.C. and referred to Indian cottons as "sindon" (Peebles, 1981, p.9). With the arrival of Alexander the Great and his Greek troops in 326 B.C., the knowledge of India and Indian cottons became even more widespread. Descriptions containing references to Indian cloth occur in the writing of many Greek scholars. Megasthenes, for example, wrote of Indian textiles "worked in gold and ornamented with various stones...also flowered garments of the finest muslin" (in Dongerkerry, 1951, p.9). From about the 1st century AD, the Romans sought the fine Indian cottons they called "woven winds" (Peebles, 1981, p.10).

The arrival of Arab traders in Sind in 712 A.D. (Welch, 1986, : p.25), initiated the spread of Islam throughout India and Central Asia. The Mongol Hordes had originated in Central Asia but migrated west attacking much of the Islamic Empire. Converting to Islam, and influenced by the Persians, the Mongols turned to India in the 13th century to spread their new-found faith. The Mughul (Persian for Mongol) dynasty which resulted from their success was a period of intense creativity as the Indian,

Persian, and Islamic influences intermingled. Welch noted:

As the conquerors adjusted to their new surroundings, Islam's cultural heritage enriched and blended with India's and by 1300 truly Indo-Muslim idioms were emerging in the art and architecture of the sultanates of North India and the Deccan (Welch, 1986, p.25).

Peebles adds that

Like all the arts of the Mughal court, textiles reflected the synthesis of Islam's formal, very decorative, and curvilinear tendencies with the Indian sensitivity to nature, natural colours, and banded patterning (Peebles, 1981, p.11).

It should be pointed out that specific workshops existed to produce fine works for the Mughal aristocracy. The textiles produced for the elite were possibly more heavily influenced by the imported tastes of the rulers, at least initially. The relationship between the textiles made for the elite and those made for trade or for domestic use is not clear and not addressed in the literature.

It is obvious that Indian textiles have always been extensively traded. Gittinger points out that "India had more than two millennia of growing, handling, and processing of cotton before any other areas of significant cotton cultivation developed in the Old World " (Gittinger, 1982, p.16). She also notes that India was, through their technical mastery, able to adapt their products to suit foreign markets (Gittinger, 1982, p.15). The textiles uncovered at Fostat in Egypt are evidence of this.

Fostat had been an important trade centre for the Romans then the Byzantines but declined in importance after the Arabs captured it in the 7th century A.D. It was eventually abandoned by the Arabs to the Copts and Jews in favor of Cairo to the north. It nevertheless maintained a

Muslim cemetery (Gittinger, 1982, p.33). The fragments of textiles discovered at Fostat can be dated to between about 1300-1500 A.D.-- contemporary with Mughul India. The fragments are modest examples of Indian trade cloth. They are all of plain weave, coarsely spun cotton with fairly simple printed patterns. Gittinger notes that only a few of the fragments are representational-- most are 'traditional' designs of geometric patterns arranged in grids, large circles, and recurring vine motifs (Gittinger, 1982, p.57). She adds that the fragments are suggestive of "very humble and common commercial cloth" (Gittinger, 1982, p.55).

From the 15th century Europeans began to trade in India (Olson, 1965, p.3; and Silverstein, 1981, p.9). The Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, the English, and finally the French established trading centres in India (Olson, 1965, p.3 and Silverstein, 1981, p.9). Gittinger notes

This trade did not confine itself to barter for spices, the textile goods attained a worth in their own right. First as novelties, then in ever broader ranges the cotton textiles came to Northern Europe (Gittinger, 1982, p.13).

The impact the brighter, lighter, washable Indian cottons had on Europeans was enormous.

From the European trade communiques one can sense that this market became captive to the very ability of India to provide variation; as the "India craze" seized the fashion world at the end of the seventeenth century, the companies home offices requested ever more diversity and novelty (Gittinger, 1982, p.17).

With the decline of Mughal rule the British came to dominate India by late in the 18th century. Silverstein commented that:

The industrialization of Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, funded significantly, it should be noted, by the profits provided by empire in India, saw a radical

decline in demand for Indian hand crafted products and literally, the demise of many of India's time honored artistic traditions. Ironically, under British initiative, this period also provides us with the first attempts at documentation of regional craft traditions and techniques (Silverstein, 1981, p.9).

Industrialization almost destroyed India's weaving tradition, it certainly caused the loss of India's preeminence in textile production. Competition with foreign mill made cloth proved impossible, "making India dependant upon England and Japan for her clothing requirements" (Olson, 1965, p.3). In the twentieth century however, steps are being taken by the Indian government to foster and preserve India's textile traditions. It is significant that the simple art of spinning and the weaving of khadi was chosen by Mahatma Ghandi as symbolic of India's independence and self reliance (Bayley, 1988, p.285).

**DESCRIBING AND DELIMITING THE FIELD OF STUDY:
EMBROIDERY IN GUJARAT AND RAJASTAN**

India's geography and climate vary from hot arid deserts, to cool mountains, to humid sub-tropical areas. The three major geographic regions are the Himalayas and their foothills to the north, the Indo-Gangetic Plain just south of the mountains, and the Deccan Plateau south of the Vindhya mountains bordering the plains³. Historically, most migrations and invasions arrived through the northwest of India. It is not surprising therefore that the older, Dravidian languages remain only in the less accessible South. The North, in contrast, is characterized by the use of the Indo-Aryan languages introduced by the many invasions and migrations of peoples who came from as far away as Iran, Sind, Baluchistan, and Central Asia. Many of these people arrived via the Middle East resulting in a significant Muslim influence, particularly in the north⁴.

Gujarat and Rajasthan are the two westernmost states of India. As I will discuss, various factors point to their interconnectedness. They comprise, for example, the hottest and most arid region of India (Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976). The area is predominantly a steppe climatic region with sparse grasses and thorny bushes. The Thar Desert lies along Western Rajasthan's border with Pakistan whereas parts of Eastern Rajasthan and Gujarat are considered tropical savanna and are somewhat less arid

³see Appendix I.

⁴see Appendix II.

(Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976, p.23)⁵.

For the purposes of this study, the most significant reason for considering Rajasthan and Gujarat together is the homogenous appearance of domestic embroidery. Taken as a whole, it is significantly different from that of other

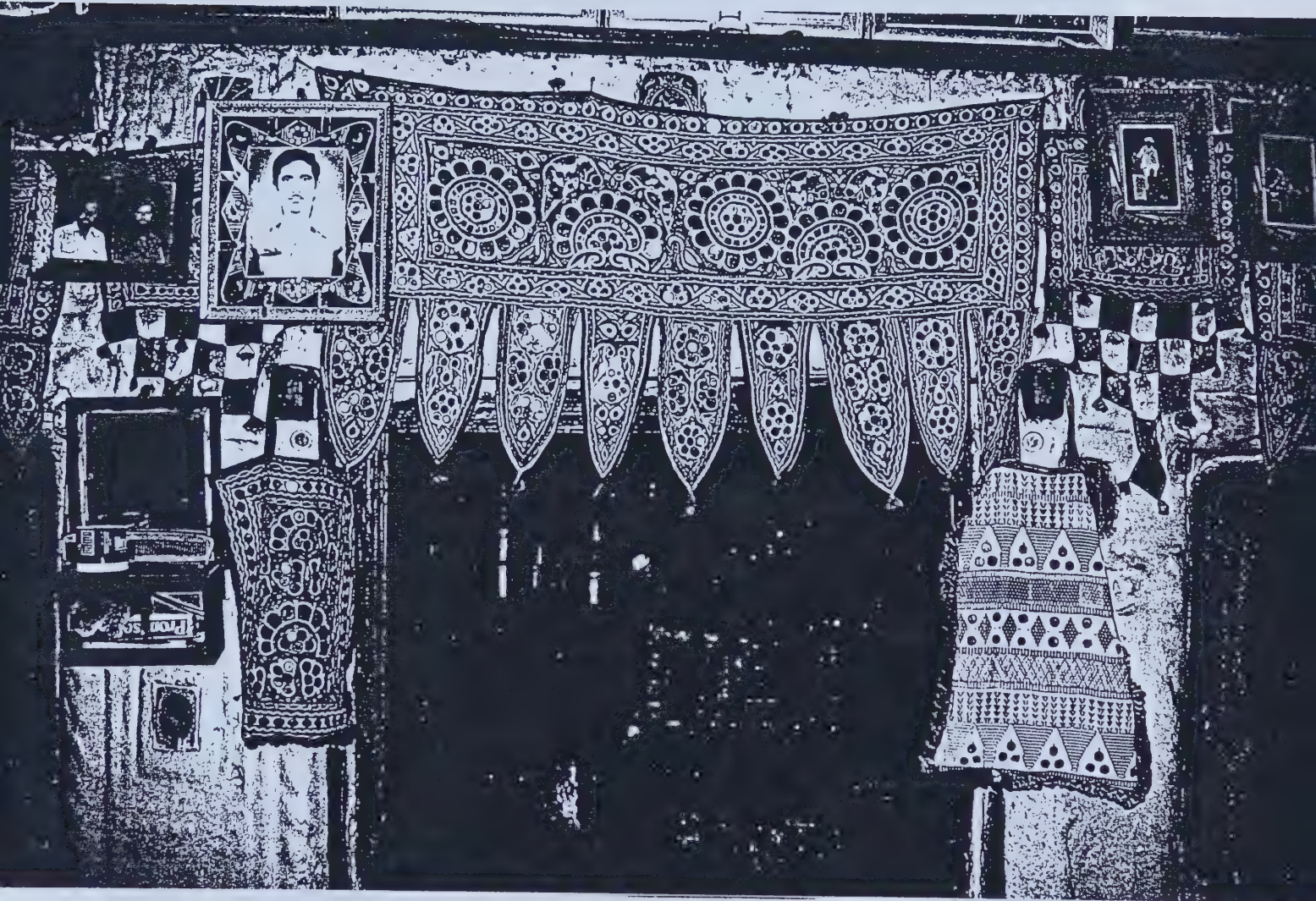


Illustration 2. A doorway in Kutch, Gujarat with embroidered hangings. Reprinted from Gillow and Barnard, 1991.

⁵see Appendix III.

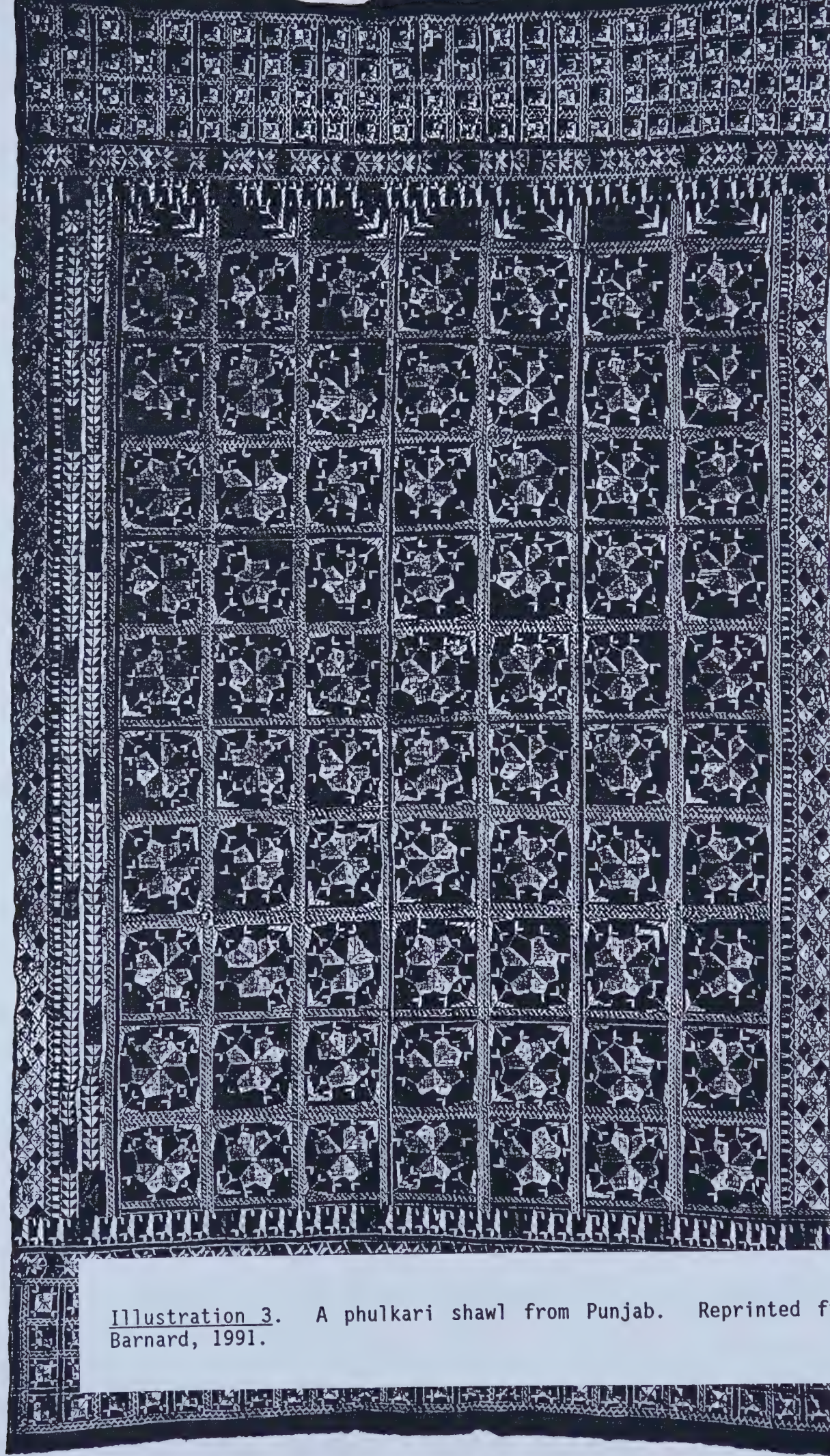


Illustration 3. A phulkari shawl from Punjab. Reprinted from Gillow and Barnard, 1991.

parts of India. It is characterized by the use of the chain stitch, mirrors, and a boldness or playfulness of design (see illustration 2.).

To illustrate this point, I will briefly describe the embroidery of the Indian area surrounding Gujarat and Rajasthan. Phulkari work is a type of embroidery which uses long darning stitches to cover most of the surface of the fabric backing. It is found in the state of Punjab to the north of Rajasthan (see illustration 3.). East of Rajasthan, Chikan embroidery is made in Uttar Pradesh. It is characterized by white stitching on thin white muslin with open work (see Illustration 4.). The embroidery of the states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are composed of tiny regular stitches that almost cover the cotton used as a background (see illustration 5.).

While the embroidery of Gujarat and Rajasthan is relatively more alike than not, variations occur. The richness of embroidery is explained by a Hindu legend.

Krishna once killed a demon in a forest who had enslaved a thousand women hailing from all parts of India, and freed them. They became his gopis- playmates and devotees- and followed him to Dwarka. Each of them brought along her own style of embroidery, all of which took root in this land of Saurashtra, making it a resplendent garden in which all types of needlework flourished (Chattopadhyay, 1977, p.5).

On a more pragmatic note, whether the earliest embroiderers were gopis or nomadic pastoralists, they express their distinctiveness through their embroidery. It is thus my aim to explore these differences and similarities in relation to the parameters set out in the introduction. For the present, I will review what is known of embroidery in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Perhaps the most obvious distinction to be made among the many

embroidery and dress styles of Gujarat and Rajasthan is that between Hindus and Muslims. Hindu women tend to wear skirts and blouses with a draped odhni covering their



Illustration 4. White on white chikan work from Uttar Pradesh. Reprinted from Gillow and Barnard, 1991



Illustration 5. An example of embroidery from Maharashtra or Madhya Pradesh. Reprinted from Gillow and Barnard, 1991.

heads. Muslim women on the other hand tend to wear a tunic-like dress over pants with a similar odhni. Religious differences are also reflected in the embroidered decoration of their clothes. Muslim women, for example, avoid figurative work. Their embroidery tends to be grid-like with geometric shapes more or less restricted to the front bodice. The Khatrie Muslims are professional dyers who live all over the Kutch and are often quite wealthy. The embroidered abas that these women wear⁶ are richly embroidered around the neck, hem and sleeves with geometric medallions reminiscent of the decorative medallions found in Islamic calligraphy. The position of this embroidery is significant. Sheila Paine suggests a connection between the tail of these medallions and the pubic area they cover (Paine, 1990). Elson claims that the Dhanetah Jats of North West Kutch who have made the Hajj "eschew embroidery completely" (Elson, 1979, p.45)⁷. Hindu embroidery conversely includes many animal and floral motifs as well as representations of various gods and goddesses, especially Ganeesha and Shiva.

An interesting exception to the generalization I have made concerning the clothing styles of the Muslims and Hindus, is discussed by Elson. Among the many herders who live along the northern frontiers of Kutch are the orthodox Banni muslims and the Hindu Harijans. The Harijans are descendants of the "untouchables," who:

may well have originally consisted of those local people
who were unwilling to abandon practices repugnant to
Aryan ideals...In recent times...some subcastes of

⁶ These abas may or may not be embroidered by professional embroiderers, Elson is not clear on the point.

⁷ The Hajj is the mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca made by Muslims. Many Muslims assume a different name after making the Hajj. Presumably the Dhanetah Jats are similarly marking this important event.

Harijans in northwest India have taken up the occupations of weaving and leatherworking. Mahatma Gandhi, who coined the word "harijan" (hari=god; jan=man), was one of the first to assimilate untouchables into the rest of society (Elson, 1979, p.14).

The Muslims on the other hand do not regard the Harijans or any others as less than equal⁸. This fact actually contributed to the spread of the Muslim faith and in particular Sufism⁹ throughout India. Because Muslims do not regard the Harijans as untouchable, "interaction between these groups has been possible and this interaction has produced a remarkable fusion of culture traits" (Elson, 1979, p.61). The Banni Muslims for example wear a full skirt, blouse, and odhni very similar to those of their Harijan neighbors (Elson, 1979, p.72). Unlike the Harijans however, the Banni Muslims do not (can not?) embroider their odhnis (Elson, 1979, p.84).

Embroidery in Gujarat tends to be brightly colored in bold, seemingly spontaneous patterns. Embroidery of women's clothing is concentrated on the blouse (choli) and skirt borders of the Hindus and on the bodice of the caftan-like dresses of the Muslim women. Other commonly embroidered articles include sthapanas¹⁰, as well as hangings for doorways (torans), square hangings (chaklas), children's hoods (natis), and quilt covers (darnia).

⁸In terms of how Hindus treat Muslims, Pocock notes that the dominant caste of Central Gujarat, the Patidar, treat their Muslim workers as a members of a lower, but non-polluting caste (Pocock 1973:31).

⁹Sufism is a form of Islamic mysticism.

¹⁰Sthapanas- small embroidered, envelope-shaped hangings illustrating Ganeesha and his two consorts which are used as shrines (Chattopadhyay 1977:5).

The two most characteristic aspects of embroidery in Gujarat, and specifically Kutch, is the use of mirrors (abhala=mirror embroidery) and the chain stitch. Mirrors are applied to cloth using the buttonhole stitch which enables the embroiderer to fix the mirror without piercing it. I have already mentioned the mochi bharat made by the cobblers initially on leather and later on fine fabrics including silk. The mochis enjoyed court patronage and are professional male embroiderers. Apart from the mochis, embroidery is done by women exclusively (Chattopadhyay, 1977, p.1). Women also use the chain stitch but more commonly with a needle than with the ari (Jain, 1982, p.79). Other stitches used include the closed square chain, vell, closed herringbone, satin, darning, and buttonhole stitch. Hindu motifs include many plant and animal forms as well as gods and goddesses that are sometimes geometrized. Muslim embroidery tends to be more grid-like with strictly geometric patterns.

The two most common types of embroidery in Rajasthan are both a form of 'filling work.' Mochi bharat is used to fill large areas with chain stitch and suggests association with Kutch, Sind, and Pakistan. Heer Bharat (Heer=unspun flossy silk) on the other hand is filling work which uses the buttonhole or double satin stitch resembling the embroidery of Haryana and the phulkari¹¹ work of the Punjab (Grewal & Grewel, 1988, p.67). While the same sorts of motifs appear in the embroidery of Rajasthan and Gujarat, Muslim embroidery here tends to be more expansive, less grid-like or contained. Both mochi and heer bharat are used for

¹¹Phulkari, which means flower work, is a type of embroidery found in some parts of Rajasthan but is more commonly associated with Punjab. The characteristic stitch of phulkari work is the darning stitch which is most often worked with an untwisted silk floss on khadi.

personal and household textiles including blouses, skirts, odhnis, wall hangings, purses, cushion covers, caps and decorative trappings for animals (Grewel & Grewel, 1988, p.72).

DESCRIBING AND DELIMITING THE FIELD OF STUDY:
THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF THE REGION

What is known of the history of Rajasthan and Gujarat reveals that they have been linked several times throughout history. Archaeological sites indicate the early Harappan influence of the region. They were later united by the Asoka Empire (250 B.C.), the Gupta Empire (400 A.D.), by the Delhi Sultanate (1335 A.D.), and the Moghul Dynasty (1707 A.D.)¹². The British occupied the area around Ajmer in Rajasthan and Ahmedabad and Surat in Gujarat leaving the rest of the area as dependant native states (Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976; and National Atlas of India, 1984).

Linguistic and religious evidence points to connections between the two states. With a common root in Sanskrit, an Indo-European language introduced by the Aryans, Rajastani and Gujarati were very similar until 1500 A.D. After this period, Rajastani became increasingly influenced by Western Hindi (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974, p.286). Rajasthan and Gujarat were divided along linguistic boundaries to form two states in 1956 shortly after Indian Independence (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974; and National Atlas of India, 1984). Rajasthan and Gujarat are predominantly Hindu although a significant number of Muslims also reside there. Jainism, an offshoot of Hinduism not dissimilar to Buddhism, is mainly confined to these two states¹³. Jainism, with asceticism at its

¹²see Appendix IV.

¹³According to census figures, Jains make up 0.5% of India's population. The rest of the population is 83% Hindu, 11% Muslim, 3% Christian, 2% Sikh, and 0.75% Buddhist (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974).

core, influenced Ghandi in his efforts for labour reform in Ahmedabad, Gujarat (Folkert, 1985)¹⁴.

The various ethnic groups found throughout Rajasthan and Gujarat suggest that many migrations took place into and within the region. With reference to the relationship of Rajasthan to the rest of Western India, Grewel and Grewel note that

the social history of the state is closely related to that of its neighbouring states of Sindh and Gujarat on the western side and Punjab and Haryana in the north and north-east. The common ethnic race in all these states is the migratory tribe of Jats, the tillers and the peasants (Grewel & Grewel, 1988, p.62).

In addition to the Jats, a heterogenous cultural group who migrated from Halaf, an area between what is now Iran and Iraq (Elson, 1979, p.41), the tribal Bhils are found throughout the area (Tribal Map of India, 1967)¹⁵. Elson notes that Rajputs originating in the Thar Desert regions of Pakistan and Rajistan are also found in Kutch. The Rabari are another group who migrated from Rajasthan to Kutch and who brought their tradition of embroidery with them (Frater, 1975, p.47).

Embroidered evidence may support this idea. For example, the technique of mochi bharat is found all over Gujarat and Rajasthan. The mochis of Bhuj are cobblers who decorate leather goods with a chain stitch using the ari, "a fine awl with a small notch just above the point to form a hook" (Irwin & Hall, 1973, p.73). Irwin and Hall note that the fine embroidered leathers of Sind may have inspired the use of mochi bharat on cloth (Irwin & Hall, 1973, p.73). Alternatively and on a less pragmatic

¹⁴see Appendix V.

¹⁵see Appendix VI.

note, Grewel and Grewel claim that "according to legend, the mochis of Bhuj had learnt (sic) this embroidery from a Muslim saint who came there from Sindh in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries" (Grewel & Grewel, 1988, p.65). Whatever its origins it spread to the Barmer district of Rajasthan (Grewel & Grewel, 1988, p.64), Saurashtra (Jaitly, 1985, p.5) and Kathiawar in Gujarat (Irwin & Hall, 1973, p.74).

Judy Frater's work among the Rabari of Kutch, Gujarat further suggests the interconnectedness of the region. She notes that though the Rabari are Hindu, long association with Muslims may have influenced their predominantly geometric embroidery. Parrots, peacocks, and elephants are occasionally used on certain non-apparel items but only in highly stylized forms. These animals are not found in Kutch and thus may remain from the Rabaris earlier association with the Royal Courts of Marwad in Rajistan during the Moghul period (Frater, 1975).

LITERATURE REVIEW

INACCURACIES IN THE LITERATURE

The bibliographies of a large number of books and articles on Indian textiles, revealed that the same handful of sources were used again and again. It appears that little, if any, new field research has been conducted since the publication of these three pivotal accounts¹⁶. Despite the apparent limited research on Indian embroidery, the literature lacks consistency and accuracy. Many of the accounts contradict one another. Terminology is particularly confusing-- sometimes a local term is used with a variety of English spellings, sometimes an English or French term.¹⁷

Historic information is also contradictory. Grewal and Grewel suggest that the technique of mochi bharat was developed in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in the Bhuj area by the mochi, a professional cobbler caste (Grewal & Grewel, 1988, p.65). Dhamija claims, however, that "Mochi embroiderers moved to Saurashtra in the fourteenth century" (Dhamija, 1985, p.5) implying earlier knowledge of the technique.

In addition to these discrepancies and logistical problems, the organization of much of this material belies an obsession with classification that is often not culturally relevant. Phillips pointed out that some of the questions researchers have been asking of objects

¹⁶These three 'classic' sources are Dongerkerry (1951), Watson (1886), and Watt (1904).

¹⁷For example, most books describe 'pat' as an untwisted silk floss used in embroidery, particularly in phulkari work (Elson, 1979; Nanavati, 1966; Mehta, 1970; Hitkari, 1980; and Grewel & Grewel, 1988). Irwin and Hall however define "pat" as "a cloth. The word is also used for a painting on cloth" (Irwin & Hall, 1973, p.211).

(and for our purposes of embroidery) are not necessarily their own,

but rather the questions originally posed by the cultural-evolutionist founders of material culture studies. The type of classification that still dominates the field is that of a nineteenth century butterfly collector (Phillips, 1989, p.7).

Clearly the questions asked by the authors of this material on Western India's embroidery, like those of the nineteenth century butterfly collector, focus more on "what" rather than "why" or "how." This focus is indicative of early ideas about material culture. Sometimes the embroideries are discussed according to region (as in Nanavati, 1966; and Grewel & Grewel, 1988), by motif or technique (as in Holford, 1975; Bhavnani, 1974; and Chattopadhyay, 1977), by 'school' (as in Hacker & Turnbull, 1982), a particularly unfortunate term since no institutions exist, or some inconsistent combination of these (Elson, 1979).

Discussing embroidery by category is not necessarily a problem. The difficulty with this material is that the categories are either irrelevant (as in the case of division by motif or school) or not developed. This sort of organization 'winks' at social context but remains superficial. Within these categories most of the accounts simply list the embroidery techniques, motifs, colours, materials, and uses, again, with little contextual information.

These issues underscore a more contentious and pervasive one-- How do we view material culture? How should we view embroidery? In the introduction I pointed out that Emery describes embroidery in plastic, objective terms. My interests, quite specifically, go beyond the immediate embroidered object to include its context-- it is relationship

with culture. The study of material culture has changed and developed, presumably with the decline of colonialism and a growing analytic trend in the social sciences. The authority of an anthropologist, for example, to interpret, or speak for others is being questioned. A review of how material culture has been approached historically assists in the analysis of the available literature on the embroidery of Western India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

MATERIAL CULTURE AND WAYS OF LOOKING AT OBJECTS

What is material culture? Material culture refers to two phenomena: artifacts and the study of material culture. As objects, material culture has been defined as:

"concrete artifacts or manufactures" (Sturtevant, 1969, p.631).

"objects made by man or modified by man. It excludes natural objects" (Prown, 1982, p.2)

"The tangible phenomena of a human society that are the purposive products of learned patterns that are instinctive" (Reynolds, 1983, p.213).

These definitions range from including physical objects to those made by humans to those made by human society according to instinct. While Reynolds' definition is the most broad, in as much as it would include cultural geography, it is also the most 'loaded' definition. Reynolds assumes that "tangible phenomena" are determined not by individuals but by society and then according to inherent patterns.

Some writers note that the term material culture is problematic. Prown states that it seems "unsatisfactory" because we perceive material and culture as contradictory things. Reynolds claims that this is a "misnomer" and that our focus should be

on the relationship between material phenomena and Man (sic) in other words the material system containing the material culture, not just the material culture itself (Reynolds, 1983, p.213).

Clearly it is not the artifacts that are important so much as their relationship with culture. Sturtevant notes that it is the "contexts of the objects in the social and cognitive systems of their makers and users"

(1969, p.631) that is of primary interest. Prown states that

Material culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs-- values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions-- of a particular community or society at a given time (Prown, 1982, p.1).

But these interpretations of the aims of material culture studies are contemporary. During the so-called Museum Period (1840-1890), artifacts were studied not for what they revealed about a culture so much as what they illustrated.

At the beginning and in the prehistory of anthropology, typological studies of artifacts (both archaeological and ethnological) were important for the development of evolutionary theories (Sturtevant, 1969, p.622).

In other words, artifacts were categorized according to their type and used as evidence (or not) of evolutionary progress.

The next phase, the Museum-University Period (1890-1920) was characterized by intensive field collecting by trained professionals and close ties between museums and universities. Franz Boas, for example, held positions at both Columbia University and the American Museum of Natural History.

Museum collections remained important for research-- in fact, they became perhaps even more important, for the theoretical developments of this period often used museum collections as evidence, on such questions as the relative importance of diffusion as opposed to independent invention, the relation between cultures and their natural environments, and in applications of concepts from biology in developing the notions of culture-areas and the age-area techniques of pseudo-historical reconstruction (Sturtevant, 1969, p.623).

The decline in importance of museum collections and material culture studies began as early as 1905 when Boas quit the American Museum of Natural History. It was not until the great strides made in linguistics in the 50's and 60's together with the rise of semiotics and symbolism

that fresh interest in material culture was stimulated (Stott & Reynolds, 1987, p.2; and Miller, 1987, p.95). It would appear that this shift from material culture as illustration of imposed theory to a phenomenon with a reality beyond appearances (beyond physical facts) is a result of the influence of linguistics and symbolism. That artifacts reveal ideological information is not, however, common to all approaches to material culture.

As well as interest in symbolism, the 1960's saw the return of evolutionism and a search for causation. "Prominent within this theoretical orientation were those seeking cultural causality in terms of environmental adaptation or the material bases of life" (Gabarino, 1977, p.87). One of the most well known cultural materialists is Marvin Harris. Harris, the most vulgar of cultural materialists,

has taken it upon himself to examine virtually every important anthropological case where customs or institutions have been interpreted in symbolic terms--religious ideologies, value systems, cognitive organization-- and to produce a materialist counterinterpretation. Sacred cattle in India, pig herding in New Guinea, the Kwakiutl Indian potlach in which blankets and valuables are flamboyantly destroyed, and other customs emerge as ways of regulating resources, acquiring protein, controlling population, or otherwise adapting to material and biological exigencies (Keesing, 1976, p.150).

Cultural Materialists and Behaviourists would argue that material culture is determined according to real physical needs. Fenton adds that this "posits a functional relationship of technology to environment, and of man to a secondary environment which his culture creates" (Fenton, 1974, p.23). Therefore humans are subservient to the very physicality of their needs and desires which culture mediates.

In contrast to this materialist view of material culture, an idealist view separates culture as cognitive code and material artifact, the

ideational from the physical (Lechtman, 1975, p.11). Ideas mediate culture and material culture-- ideas that encompass but are not predicted solely by materialistic concerns.

Thoreau was possibly the first to question whether objects themselves are really part of culture when he characterized an arrowhead as a "fossil thought" (Fenton, 1974, p.24).

A fossil thought? A prehistoric thought? A specific way of viewing the environment and reacting to it through ideas are manifest in Thoreau's phrase. In this sense the arrowhead reflects the culture that gave rise to its existence. This is the position of Miles Richardson:

Wherever man (sic) has gone, wherever he sees that he is going, from Antarctica to Jupiter and beyond, the magic of culture transforms these places into mirrors that reflect his image (Richardson, 1974, p.5).

Miller notes, however, that there has been a "tendency to perceive objects as being reflective in a relatively passive sense" (Miller, 1987, p.96). He writes about how objects, as reflective of culture and patterned by culture, "privilege society as the signifier" (Miller, 1987, p.96). He links this with our "modern conception of the self" (Miller, 1987, p.96): our egocentrism. "Any simple notion of signification as reflection, tends towards a subject-object dualism which fails to acknowledge the process underlying their mutual construction" (Miller, 1987, p.96).

Other views of material culture see it embedded in, and responding to the same principles as culture. The most obvious example would be Levi-Strauss and French Structuralism. Levi-Strauss believes that the brain's structure affects behaviour and, therefore, material culture (Gabarino, 1977, p.84). It is this deep structure, that Levi-Strauss pursues. He

believes that the brain operates in terms of binary oppositions which is reflected by the dualistic patterning of our world (Gabarino, 1977, p.84). Levi-Strauss has been attacked as a mental determinist- most adamantly by Marvin Harris.

The great "clam siphon debate" exposed the opposition of Levi-Strauss and Marvin Harris' approaches to culture. Levi-Strauss interpreted a number of myths according to his ideas of dualism. Harris attempted to explode this interpretation by offering materialistic, positivistic reasons for the content of the myths. Whereas Levi-Strauss credits the structure of the mind with causation and Harris presumes physical needs determine material culture, both objectify culture and in this case myths.

In Style in Technology- Some Early Thoughts(1975), Heather Lechtman discusses, from an engineer and archaeologist's point of view, how technology can reveal the "plans" and "reasons" behind its products. She argues that artifacts as well as the technology that produced them are patterned in a particular, stylistic way. She says:

Style is the manifest expression, on the behavioral level, of cultural patterning that is usually neither cognitively known nor even knowable by members of a cultural community except by scientists who may have analyzed successfully their own cultural patterns or those of other cultures (Lechtman, 1975, p.4).

In this unconscious patterning Lechtman is particularly reminiscent of Levi Strauss who would argue that the native persons whose myths he interpreted could not know their deep meanings. What was not clear from Lechtman's article was what, according to her, determines the patterning of culture.

The last objective method I will discuss has been enormously influential as I noted earlier. Linguistics and semiotic blossomed in the

50's and 60's inspiring new approaches to material culture. That objects communicate is a given. How they communicate according to this approach, is as language does.

The limitations of a semiotic model for the study of material culture are noted by Grant McCracken. In discussing the relationship between clothing and language, he cites scholars who refer to clothing as "silent language" (Nash, 1977, see McCracken, 1987, p.110) as well as more sophisticated references to the "syntax," "semantics," and "grammar" of clothing (Sahlins in McCracken, 1987, p.110). He warns, however, that as a tool for understanding clothing, language is suitable as a metaphor-- but is only a metaphor (McCracken, 1987, p.111). Whereas words can be combined in new ways to create meanings,

the wearer does not have this combinational freedom, the interpreter examines an outfit not for a new message but for an old one fixed by convention. Combinational freedom can be exercised by the wearer only with the effect of baffling the interpreter (McCracken, 1987, p.117).

Miller points out that:

In contrast to the study of objects, the study of language is surely one of the most flourishing of all academic pursuits, a major success story in the social sciences. One result of this has been the pervasive influence of linguistic methodology upon such studies of objects as have developed in recent decades; and while the rise of semiotics in the 1960's was advantageous in that it provided for the extension of linguistic research into other domains, any of which could be treated as a semiotic system. This extension took place at the expense of subordinating the object qualities of things to their word-like properties (Miller, 1987, p.95).

I have already suggested that objects communicate. The objective approaches discussed above, imply that what objects communicate has more to do with the questions we ask or assumptions we make of them than with

their inherent qualities. This point is made clear by investigation how insufficient language is to communicate certain phenomena. Artifacts are expressive but not in the way of language. Isadora Duncan once commented that if she could have said it, she would not have had to dance it.

Miller argues for a relationship between objects and the unconscious. Citing examples of child development work by Piaget and of aesthetics by Langer, he notes the important role played by objects in expressing unconscious states.

This relationship between object and unconscious is by no means obvious. Indeed, the very concrete physicality of objects might lead us to expect quite the opposite conclusion, which is that it is language which organizes the deep unconscious while objects as visible images are a relatively superficial phenomenon. If, however, the social properties of objects are not as 'evident' as they are visible, this very factor may actually be, in part, responsible for our inability to appreciate the significance of the object. This, in turn, might account for our difficulty in dealing with objects through academic studies dominated by language. Rather as with other areas fundamental to the operation of the unconscious, artifacts may resist conscious articulation and in a sense be embarrassed by language (Miller, 1987, p.100).

Rather than objects being created in a passive objective sense by physical needs or the actual structure of the brain, Miller seems to suggest that material culture is an expression of the unconscious and therefore personal. In this sense, Miller's approach is more subjective than others. It is because our reaction to objects is individualistic as opposed to general that we have difficulty communicating it with language (which is, after all, composed of generally agreed upon signs). In this sense, the object can not be seen as simply the product of culture or biology. It cannot be divorced from them nor from the unconscious. Objects are thus not a reflection but an extension of ourselves.

Furthermore, this more subjective approach to material culture sees it as a subject in history-- embedded in time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE IMPLICATIONS OF ART HISTORY

Another approach to material culture, is that of Art History. Western notions of Art History places pre-eminence on the Art Object. Art History has traditionally viewed the artist as a genius who produces objects to be revered according to very specific yet intangible criteria. The art object is meant to stand alone, without context, to be appreciated not only for its formal qualities but how well it communicates. What is communicated is purely subjective. Artifacts are thus embedded in society but no longer determined by it. Art is the product of individual artists who are able to harness or express their unconscious.

The problems associated with this view of material culture are manifold. Ultimately it has an extremely narrow focus which is both ethnocentric and androcentric. Because so much of the literature I reviewed on Indian textiles appears to have been negatively influenced by Western Art History, an extended discussion of its implications in relation to this literature is in order.

Art History is based on several assumptions that have come under fire recently from feminists, postmodernists, marxists, and structuralists (Phillips, 1989, p.8).

The first of these rejected assumptions is the notion of a universal history of art that evolves in a linear fashion and culminates in the art of Western Europe. The second rejected assumption equates artistic with cultural style...permitting a reconstruction of cultural history on the basis of a sequence of great objects alone (Phillips, 1989, p.5).

The first of these assumptions equates "great" art with the Western model.

Unfortunately this results in a very ethnocentric view of what art is. The second assumption is inextricably bound with the pre-eminence of the object. The art object is seen as something that reflects culture and is made by an individual genius. This focus removes and rarefies art and the individuals who create it from their real social context.

In reference to the nature of the Art 'system', Linda Nochlin confirms that:

these assumptions are intrinsic to a great deal of art-historical writing...To encourage a dispassionate, impersonal, sociological and institutionally-oriented approach would reveal the entire romantic, elitist individually-glorifying monograph producing substructure upon which the profession of art history is based (Nochlin, 1971, p.25).

The West largely determines what is or is not Art. Its criteria for making these judgements are based on Western models and are therefore ethnocentric. Art History thus reinforces itself. Dawn Ades wrote that,

The dominant West has...assumed that its history is the only history, and that other (primitive) people don't have one...The West has also tended to believe that...it is necessarily in the vanguard of a constant progress ever onward and upward. So far as the perceived cultural and aesthetic values of other societies are similar to its own they are judged to be 'civilized' or primitive (Ades, 1986, p.12).

Judgement, in the hands of Western Art Historians equals power and the reproduction of that power through exclusion. "Omission is one of the mechanisms by which fine art reinforces the values and the beliefs of the powerful and suppresses the experience of others" (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987, p.332). Omission is a well known tool to maintain an uneven balance of power between the sexes as well as between Western and 'primitive' arts.

The implications of this have been explored by a number of authors.

For example, Nochlin suggests examining the question "Why have there been no great women artists?" not to answer it and therefore "reinforce its negative implications," (Nochlin, 1971, p.23) but to "pierce through the cultural-ideological limitations of the time and its specific "professionalism" to reveal biases and inadequacies not merely in dealing with the question of women, but in the very way of formulating the crucial questions of the discipline as a whole" (Nochlin, 1971, p.23).

Deconstruction of the 'Art System' is also suggested by Mascia-Lees, Sharpe & Cohen (1989) in order to lay bare the power structures which have subjugated women and objectified art. It has been increasingly suggested that Art should be realized as the ideology it is and critically analyzed (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1989, p.351). Summing up this most recent trend, Rees and Borzello note

At present, the two most distinctive trends in the new art history are the interest in the social aspects of art and the stress on theory...Part of its aim is to 'deconstruct' the most familiar and unquestioned ideas, in particular the notion that the work of art is a direct expression of the artist's personality, the belief that art contains eternal truths free of class and time and the conviction that art is somehow 'above' society or out of its reach (Rees & Borzello, 1986, p.8).

The "social aspects of art" means essentially the context of that art and can imply a culturally relevant system for judgement. Nochlin wrote that

the total situation of art making, both in terms of the development of the art maker, and in the nature and quality of the work of art itself, occur in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure (Nochlin, 1971, p.31).

Clearly the aim of this brand of art history (called the New Art History) is more broad than the previous one. It approaches what has long

been the concern of anthropology: culture. Rather than treating the art object as something which reflects society, it is understood to respond to the same structural principles as society (Adams, 1980, p.219) in other words, to be integrated and therefore a dynamic element of culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

FEMINISM, MATERIAL CULTURE, AND TEXTILE STUDIES

In the last section I demonstrated the influence Art History has had on much of the literature dealing with embroidery in India. I concluded with a call for a more holistic approach that moves beyond the object to include the socio-cultural context of that object. This study is, in itself, a call for a re-balancing of the powers which have excluded women and women's arts from the textbooks. In a sense, my study must start back at the beginning by describing the embroidery styles and techniques I discover. This is necessary because the information available in the literature is neither accurate, nor complete. My aim, however, is to go beyond the description of the immediate object. I will note embroidery in relation to the women who execute it. I hope, therefore, that the data I collect will help fill the gaps in the literature on Indian embroidery, and explode the patriarchal assumptions implicit in much of it.

My interest in women's embroidery developed not only from my own textile art, but from my growing awareness of and involvement in feminist research. Feminism rushed onto the scene in the 70's and profoundly changed the nature of scholarship. Feminists have exposed the exclusion

of women from, for example, science (Cormack, personal communication, 1992; and Franklin, 1990) and Art History (Nochlin, 1971).

Feminism has also raised questions about epistemology. According to Lorraine Code, feminism and ecology have contributed to an examination of what is knowledge and how we know what we know. The monopoly science has held on what constitutes knowledge has been exposed. Codes suggests that there are other ways of knowing, including: aesthetic knowledge, paradigmatic knowledge, testimonial knowledge, and knowledge by engagement (Code).

Sandra Harding argues against the idea of a specific feminist method. Rather, it is feminist methodology and the epistemological questions it raises that have challenged the academy.

She notes,

We can see in this work alternative origins of problematics, explanatory hypotheses and evidence, alternative purposes of inquiry, and a new prescription for the appropriate relationship between the inquirer and her/his subject of inquiry (Harding, 1987, p.1).

The development of feminist art making and criticism are discussed in "The feminist critique of art history" by Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews. They claim that the earliest feminist research in art focused on the "nature, evaluation and status of female artistic production" (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987, p. 329). This early stage of feminist research involved the recovery of "lost" women artists and a critical reexamination of the established view of art history as a linear progression (Gouma-Peterson, & Mathews, 1987). In addition, the feminists of this period were interested in exploring what they believed was a female aesthetic.

The first decade of feminist art thus was buoyed not only by anger, but by a new sense of community, the attempts to develop a new art to express a new sensibility, and an optimistic faith in the ability of art to promote and even engender a feminist consciousness (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987, p.332).

Gouma-Peterson and Mathews claim that feminist inquiry into art history began with Linda Nochlin's article "Why have there been no great women artists?" (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987, p. 326). Nochlin's article, written in 1971, is still timely and provocative. She was perhaps the first to critically examine the accepted canons of art history and the social context of art production. For example, Nochlin disassembles the question "Why have there been no great women artists?" in order to expose the assumptions it is based upon. She notes that in relation to this question,

the feminist's first reaction is to swallow the bait, hook, line and sinker, and to attempt to answer the question as it is put: i.e., to dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history...But they do nothing to question the assumptions lying behind the question "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" On the contrary, by attempting to answer it, they tacitly reinforce its negative implications (Nochlin, 1971, p. 23).

One of these assumptions is the notion of the "great" artist. Because of art history's emphasis on the achievements of artists rather than the social factors contributing to their success, art history is a progression of seemingly magically endowed individuals. Thus if women were capable of greatness they would have been a part of this progression - that they have remained largely unknown and undistinguished is proof that they are not capable of greatness (Nochlin, 1971, p.28).

Nochlin notes that the question,

"Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" is simply the top tenth of an iceberg of misinterpretation and

misconception; beneath lies a vast bulk of shaky ideas about the nature of art and its situational concomitants, about the nature of human abilities in general and of human excellence in particular, and the role that the social order plays in all of this (Nochlin, 1971, p.24).

Her conclusion, with its emphasis on context, specificity, and an examination of assumptions is more akin to anthropology than 'traditional' Art History. She concludes,

that art is not a free, autonomous activity of the super-endowed individual, influenced by previous artists, and more vaguely and superficially by "social forces," but rather, that the total situation of art making, both in terms of the development of the art maker and the nature and quality of the work of art itself, occur in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure, and are mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions, be they art academies, systems of patronage, mythologies of the divine creator, artist as he-man or social outcast" (Nochlin, 1971, p.31).

A general trend in the social sciences has been to move from description to a more critical, analytical stance. Parallels thus exist between feminist art research, material culture studies, and textile research. All three areas were initially descriptive but have increasingly looked beyond the object to include the socio-cultural setting (see for example Nochlin, 1971; Phillips, 1989; Stocking, 1985; and Schneider, 1987).

After the initial impetus to answer Nochlin's "Why Have there Been No Great Women Artists?" and uncover examples of underappreciated women artists, the trend has been increasingly to examine the question, and lately, to understand women's art from their perspective. This parallels what is happening within textile research generally. We seem to be moving away from the object as rarified, preeminent, and central in an objective sense, to research which examines the whole context of a textile.

Feminist researchers are questioning the treatment of women in history as objects, increasingly looking at them as subjects (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, & Cohen, 1989). Carol Duncan reminds us that,

More and better criticism within established modes-- old art history with women added-- these are not real solutions. The value to established art thinking and how it functions as ideology must be critically analyzed, not promoted anew (in Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1989, p.351).

Textile researchers seem similarly to be changing the focus of their analysis-- that is from looking at textiles as objects to be described and measured, to textiles as subjects to be understood. Jane Schneider and Annette Weiner, for example, in their introduction to Cloth and Human Experience, illustrate the roles cloth has played other than those normally associated with women and tradition.

Throughout history, cloth has furthered the organization of social and political life...This book brings to light the properties of cloth that underlie its social and political contributions, the ritual and social domains in which people acknowledge these properties and give them meaning, and the transformations of meaning over time (Weiner & Schneider, 1988, p.1).

In The Anthropology of Cloth Schneider reviews "the role of cloth consumption in the consolidation of social relations and in the expression of social identities and values" (Schneider, 1988, p.409). Clearly both articles situate textiles in a specific context and view them not as indicators or reflections of society but as intimately involved players. Textiles are neither dismissed as insignificant women's work, nor idealized. Schneider's analysis is particularly broad and, in fact, reminiscent of Eric Wolf's world systems approach (Wolf, 1982) that links phenomena globally.

Two other examples of textiles as subjects and therefore integral to culture

are by Lawrence Hirschfeld and Danielle Geirnaert-Martin. Hirschfeld "offers a structural-marxist analysis of the San Blas Cuna (Panama) aesthetic tradition" (Hirschfeld, 1977, p.104). He proposes a structured system that encompasses Cuna ideology, political economy, and molas. His article is not about molas as objects or even molas specifically, but the role they play in the structure of Cuna society. Similarly, Geirnaert-Martin's The Snake's Skin: Traditional Ikat in Kodi (1991) analyzes a specific cloth in terms of the motifs it uses, their organization, the various gender specific names for these motifs, and their links with West Sumbanese cosmology, ritual, and social organization. She works from within West Sumbanese culture, utilizing indigenous explanations to discover (or not) patterns of relationships.

In many ways the bulk of the literature I reviewed on Indian textiles represents a sort of 'survival' in the evolution of textile literature. Two sources however are notable exceptions to this generalization. Vickie Elson's Dowries of Kutch is a survey of embroidery in the Kutch region of Gujarat. She illustrates and describes the embroidery of various groups in Kutch noting their means of production, religion, and what distinguishes their work from that of their neighbours. Elson's work is significant in a field in which so little has been done. With her emphasis on women's embroidery, and by offering some contextual information, she is challenging the too often held notion that women's domestic embroideries are insignificant.

The second exception is the work of Judy Frater. Frater has worked extensively with the Rabari people of Kutch, Gujarat. In The Meaning of Folk Art in Rabari Life, she illustrates the meaning of Rabari embroidered

textiles in relation to their use and the significance of their motifs, arrangement, and colours. Frater also suggests relationships between needlework and other Rabari material culture. Her work with the Rabari remains the most thorough study of embroidery in Western India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE ON EMBROIDERY IN WESTERN INDIA

Unfortunately the research conducted on the history of Indian textiles generally and the embroidery of Western India specifically, is influenced by antiquated notions of material culture-- especially Art History. As such it is largely concerned with classifying and ordering according to Western notions of refinement. While the evolutionary bias implicit in this approach has now largely been rejected by anthropologists, (Gabarino, 1977) it is inextricably bound to the idea of Western Art History (Phillips, 1989; and Rees & Borzello, 1986). The history of India's earliest textiles is culled largely from archeological materials, religious texts and illustrations (see Silverstein, 1981; Olson, 1965; and Welch, 1985). Later history, particularly that following European contact, is told mainly from the point of view of Europeans and relies on non-indigenous source material (especially in Irwin & Hall 1971, 1973; and Irwin & Schwartz, 1966).

In a discussion on the Hindu view of Art, Coomaraswamy defines "rasa" as "flavor" or "aesthetic emotion" (Coomaraswamy, 1957, p.36). He claims it involves specific determinants, consequences, moods, and involuntary emotions (Coomaraswamy, 1957, p.36). Although "rasa" is known in connection with painting, sculpture, and architecture, what is it's relationship to embroidery? Do Indians maintain an artistic hierarchy that parallels the Western one? These are crucial questions which I would like to address.

The literature can very roughly be divided into two categories-- that

of a descriptive nature which places preeminence on the embroideries themselves and that of a more economic point of view which discusses the trade aspects of Indian cloth with the West. Both objectify embroidery.

The second category is primarily the concern of John Forbes Watson and John Irwin. Watson's account actually comprises what he calls an "Industrial Museum" consisting mainly of 700 samples of Indian textiles. These "museums," which were supposed to be distributed throughout Britain and India, were produced specifically to facilitate sales of British textiles in India.

About two hundred millions of souls form the population of what we commonly speak of as India, and, scant though the garments of the vast majority may be, an order to clothe them all would try the resources of the greatest manufacturing nation on earth (Watson, 1886, p.2).

Watson's comments on Indian embroidery are limited to a description of their production and economic importance. He concludes that:

There are certain fabrics which will probably always be best and most cheaply manufactured by hand. It is found to be so even in this country where the powers of machinery have been pushed to their utmost. In such manufactures the foremost place will be taken by that country which can most cheaply supply labour, intelligence, and refined taste-- all three combined. This being the case, it is not possible that England will never be able to compete successfully with the native manufacturer in the production of fabrics of this sort (Watson, 1886, p.7).

Irwin's various collaborative works are without question among the most cited accounts on Indian textiles. He concentrates on textiles made for trade with the West and on those made under court patronage (see Irwin & Hall, 1971, 1973; Irwin & Schwartz, 1966). As such his point of view is extremely limited. Unfortunately there are few complementary studies

which focus on the Indian side of the trade equation¹⁸, on the folk traditions of embroidery, or the relationship between courtly and folk traditions. By limiting his focus to the "finer" examples of Indian textiles, Irwin has contributed (if inadvertently) to a skewed perception of them. His biased presentation, achieved through omission, decontextualizing, and a narrow, ethnocentric point of view, is again evidence of the damaging influence of Art History.

The bulk of the literature I reviewed is of a descriptive nature and probably the work of interested amateurs. This type of literature certainly has a place and I do not mean to criticize it beyond the scope of its intent, however, because it is the only source of information on Western India's embroidery, it does deserve comment. Most accounts simply list embroidery techniques, motifs, colours, and uses without any contextual information. In addition to classifying, it tends to pass developmental judgements. Obviously influenced by Western notions of Art History, it assumes a linear progression of styles or forms which correspond to different degrees of sophistication and which culminate in the Western Fine Arts. This is blatantly the case in the following passage.

The development of the arts of embroidery is closely connected with the era of the individual in the history of mankind and reflects the personal expression of an entity. Man has always tried to make a given material look nicer and better by embellishment, which was the beginning of embroidery, from the simplest with counted threads to the more complicated patterns with plastic effect of metal threads. Romans called embroidering "painting with needle," for individuality of design has been as important to the embroiderer as to an artist performing in the field of art (Chattopadhyay, 1977,

¹⁸Two obvious exceptions are Varadarajan 1983 and Gittinger 1982.

p.1).

Apart from the obscure nature of this passage, it clearly illustrates a sequence of forms where: "simple" thread counted work is superseded by more "plastic" metal thread work which is superseded by "the field of art." We could deduce from this that geometrics were followed by naturalism then realism, crafts by fine art, and the decorative by the expressive. Chattopadhyay has imposed on embroidery not only a hypothetical sequence of development, but a value system. He implies that painting is the standard of excellence against which embroidery must be judged. Personally I object to the implication that textiles should be compared with painting as a standard of excellence or that they are somehow not as "good" as "real" art. Most importantly, this system of judgement has been imposed on embroidery from without. It is a Western system that may have nothing to do with indigenous ideals or values. Chattopadhyay is exercising ethnocentric authority and therefore reinforcing an uneven balance of power (which does not favor the non-Western).

This passage is also indicative of the objective nature of the art object as influenced by Art History. Embroidery is seen as an object rather than a subject. It is removed from real life and somewhat idolized. This passage also illustrates the emphasis on individual expression (ie. 'genius') divorced from society. Chattopadhyay is attempting, like his colleagues, and in the manner of a host of Art Historical predecessors to raise embroidery above culture.

Another implication we could deduce from this passage is that embroidery, work largely associated with women, is superseded or rather

less important than the work of men. Chattopadhyay describes embroidery as a feminine art because "it does not call for muscular strength or intellectual exercise...only artistic skill and sensibility" (Chattopadhyay, 1977, p.3). While other similar references appear, more often than not, women and folk embroidery are ignored or omitted. I have already mentioned Irwin's focus on trade and courtly textiles-- fields largely controlled by men. Women, so often associated with domestic pursuits and leisure activities (crafts as opposed to fine arts) have largely been excluded from both Art History and most of the literature available on Indian textiles.

Writing about the mirrored phulkari work of the Punjab, Rushtan Mehta commented:

Though rather ornate, the dully scintillating glass pieces reflecting the hues of the embroidered cloth tend the shawl a rather uncommon charm...Quite a lot of crude work is palmed off on the ignorant as true phulkari. The colours are garish, aniline dyes having been used instead of the natural products of old (Mehta, 1970 p.26).

The implications of this statement are disturbing and illustrate the problems associated with using "traditional" art history as a model for the discussion of embroidery. Art history tends to focus primarily on works as art objects largely removed from historical and social context. This attempts to displace the object from the system which creates meaning for it. Western art history affixes its own value judgements which may have nothing to do with those of the original culture. The problem with assigning new meanings to work (ie. viewing embroidery as fine art in the "traditional," Western sense) is that the work is simply at odds with that new system. It was made by and for different conditions. How can we

compare folk embroidery from Kutch with paintings from Renaissance Italy unless we fix those works to a particular time, place, and culture? The apologetic tone, the veneration of "traditional" pieces at the expense of the new as well as the ethnocentrism implicit in most of the works I reviewed is a result of judging work from only one, Western, value system. What is "traditional" is somehow more "authentic" and therefore better than contemporary work. What could be viewed as change, development or acculturation is dismissed as decline. This ethnocentrism is also reflected by the author's authoritative stance in passing judgement on not only the phulkaris, but those who make them.

Clearly what is needed in the study of Western India's embroidery (and textiles in general) is research which moves beyond the object to include the context of the work. It is by taking into account the social, cultural and historic context of the work that the ethnocentric, androcentric bias of art history can be avoided. Art history is guilty of objectifying and rarifying the art object (whose context is not "real" life but those white washed temples of culture- art galleries). Embroidery needs to be understood as a dynamic and integrated phenomena if we are to avoid freezing it in a hall of mirrors which endlessly reflects only its surface qualities.

METHODS

THEORIES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK

While the methodologies influencing my research have been implied in the literature review and developed in the last section, I will now turn to the specific methods to be employed in my study. This study will be an interpretive one in search of understanding or truths. It will pursue this understanding through ethnographic fieldwork. Interpretive social science

stems directly from the idea that the social world is not a real objective world external to man (sic) in the same sense as any other objectively existing reality (natural world) but is a world constituted by meaning. It does not exist independently of the social meanings that its members use to account for it and, hence, to constitute it. Social facts are thus not simply observed (Holy, 1990, p.28).

Clifford Geertz illustrates this admirably in a discussion of winks and twitches.

The two movements are, as movements, identical; from an I-am-the-camera, "phenomenalistic" observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference is vast; as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the fist taken for a second knows. The winker is communication, and indeed communicating in a quite precise and special way (Geertz, 1973, p.6).

Without recognizing the meaning of the action, it remains a physiological constriction of one's eyelid. The point of this example is to illustrate the difference between "thin" and "thick" description-- the latter being what ethnography is all about (Geertz, 1973). A "thick" description notes the physical act and interprets its meaning (ie. a wink

or conspiratorial code) (Geertz, 1973). Ethnographers describe and try to make sense of the cultures they immerse themselves in. This inevitably involves interpretation.

"Thick" description is thick because it attempts to understand from the point of view of the participant (the one winking). To ignore the participant or actor's point of view, is to distort reality (Holy, 1990, p.28).

Gadamer says one must enter the horizon of the subject and the situation- to grasp and be grasped by the text; there is a merging of the horizon (standpoint) of one's own understanding with the horizon of understanding which is met in the text (Hultgren, 1989, p.41).

In terms of individuals rather than text, they can never merge-- the observer can never become the observed. The ethnographic researcher must interpret the actor's actions in order to approach an understanding of how that person experiences the world. In fact, anthropological writings are themselves interpretations, and second or third order ones to boot (Geertz, 1973, p.15).

Anthropological writings or ethnographies are central to interpretive anthropology (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p.16; and Geertz, 1973). The idea of interpretation acknowledges the createdness of ethnography and therefore the role of the ethnographer (Geertz, 1973, p.15). This forces an important distinction between interpretive and natural sciences. The latter maintains its authority through an assumption of objectivity¹⁹. The former specifies its authority and admits its contestability.

Anthropology, or at least interpretive anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate (Geertz, 1973, p.29).

¹⁹See Mooney (1975) for a further discussion of science and objectivity.

Interpretive anthropology does not search for grand theories or rules. In this respect it has broken away from earlier notions of anthropology (Marcus & Fischer, 1986) and the natural sciences (Touliatos & Compton, 1988). An interpretive approach does not propose grand theories because to do so would be to undermine the specificity of its intent.

I have already mentioned the importance of ethnography to the interpretive approach. As such, the method of data collection most commonly employed is participant observation. In order to approach the understanding of the actor, the observer must attempt to place him\herself in their place.

The actions have to be available in the same way as they are to the actors. And as they are not available to the actors by simple sense experience, they cannot be so available to the observer. Like the actors s/he too has to experience them simultaneously though the senses and through thought processes (Holy, 1990, p.29).

It is therefore necessary for the observer to become a participating observer or ideally an "observing participant" which "consciously eliminates the distinction between the observer and the observed phenomena" (Holy, 1990, p.29).

For my study of embroidery in Gujarat and Rajasthan, I will, of necessity, rely on participant observation. Holy points out that,

While for the participant observer the observation is the *main* data gathering method, which is usually complemented in fieldwork by the use of other research techniques, for the observing participant active participation in the social life studied is virtually the *only* data gathering method (Holy, 1990, p.29).

While the more active observing participant role is the ideal in ethnographic fieldwork and will be pursued in later research, for the

purposes of the present study I will conduct participant observation. As Holy suggests above, observation will form my main data gathering tool. Where the opportunity presents itself, I will participate, but this is not essential to data I require at this stage.

METHODS

SAMPLING AND GATHERING DATA IN INDIA

Rajasthan and Gujarat are large and densely populated states. Because my time in the field is limited to about ten weeks (October 7 - December 20, 1992), it is necessary to divide the region up into manageable 'chunks'. Unfortunately the literature does not aid in defining what these 'chunks' should be. I mentioned earlier that studies of embroidery in Western India, have not been organized in any consistent way. Furthermore, the embroidery of Rajasthan has received very little attention. I do not know, for example, whether divisions should be made according to tribal groups, castes, or geographic regions. It is necessary, therefore, prior to entering the field, to define how the sample will be organized on a macro level (as opposed to the micro level which involves the selection of individuals).

Clearly a sample is not exhaustive but must be chosen to reasonably reflect a larger group. For example, a specific village of tribal Bhils must be selected to represent the larger Bhil community. What ever the units of study are determined to be, I will attempt a comprehensive sample of each of them. The samples must also meet the following criteria:

- domestic embroidery must be produced in reasonable abundance
- the area must be reasonably accessible and permitted by local authorities
- where distinct embroidery types are evident, this should be reflected in the sample selection

Evelyn Nodwell, a PhD candidate who has conducted research in India, pointed out the difficulty of gaining the trust of rural people in India

(personal communication, 1992). For this reason I feel it is important to spend more time with a fewer number of well chosen samples than vice versa. With only about ten weeks in the field, I estimate that 10-12 sample units will be included.

For about 3 weeks prior to data collection in the field (September 15- October 6), I plan to conduct research in museum collections in an attempt to define the nature of the samples. I will, further, be attending Stitched Textiles: An International Conference in England where I plan to draw on the expertise of Prof. Anne Morrell of Manchester Polytechnic and Linda Parry, Deputy Curator, Department of Textiles and Dress, Victoria and Albert Museum. Both of these scholars have written and conducted extensive research on embroidery. Prof. Morrell is also very knowledgeable about India.

In London, I am arranging to meet with Ms Debbie Swallow, Curator in Charge of the Indian Department, Victoria and Albert Museum. John Irwin, who has been associated with the Museum and has published widely on Indian Textiles is not available. Ms Swallow however is familiar with both his work and the collection. In Paris I have contacted Valerie Berinstain formally of the AEDTA²⁰. Ms Berinstain has agreed to show me AEDTA's collection of Indian embroideries. I plan to view these collections, identify and document specific types of embroidery styles and techniques and, drawing on the expertise of Ms Berinstain and Ms Swallow, begin to define my sample units.

This work will continue at the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

²⁰ Association pour l'Etude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie, Paris, France.

Ms Gira Sarabhai, the founder, owner and director of the Museum, has been contacted regarding the details of my project and the assistance I require. Mr. Errol Pires, Coordinator, Department of Textile Design, National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, Gujarat has similarly been contacted. I have also made an inquiry with Mr. Pires as to whether one of his students would be willing to accompany me in the field and assist with interpretation. Judy Frater, Associate Curator of Eastern Hemisphere Collections, the Textile Museum and author of The Meaning of Folk Art In Rabari Life (1975), will be in Bhuj, Gujarat and has invited me to contact her there.

While in India I also plan to visit the Shreyas Folk Museum in Ahmedabad, the National Museum in Jaipur, and several museums in Delhi.

In Rajasthan, Dr. Sandra Niessen has suggested I contact Pushpa Mathur who is knowledgeable about local textiles. I am confident other contacts in Rajasthan can be made through the existing ones. In New Delhi, Evelyn Nodwell has suggested I contact Dr. M.K. Pal, Development Commissioner of the Ministry of Textiles.

In addition to visiting museums, I would like to explore the available Indian literature on textiles. I plan to make use of the Calico Museum's library as well as various public and university libraries. Several bookstores have been recommended as good sources of textile materials including the bookstore at the Calico Museum and the Art Book Centre, Ahmedabad. I will also actively pursue the collection of local written sources on women, embroidery, textiles in general, and any other relevant literature. While the study I am proposing is focused on the embroidery available presently, subsequent research may require historic

and archival information. For this reason, I will attempt to discover what resources are available and how to access them.

I should note here that the aim of this study will not include the collection of embroidery. Any textiles that I purchase will be for my own use and available in the market. I do not intend to solicit the sale of domestic embroideries.

Prof. Anne Morrell of Manchester Polytechnic has kindly furnished me with a number of other possible contacts. Mr M.M. Desai, of Ahmedabad has been particularly recommended to me as someone familiar with Indian textiles and knowledgeable about the permits required to visit the frontier areas.

With the specific areas to be included in my study selected, and the necessary permits in hand, I plan to visit each area. Wherever possible I would like to stay in that area for a number of days rather than making day trips. The length of time spent in a community will vary with its size and the accessibility of the embroiderers, however, I would estimate about 5-6 days per community.

Initially I will orient myself to the community by studying locally available maps and history, or that available in tourist guides. I will also orient myself to the physical environment by visiting the local markets, temples, museums, and other points of interest. Collier notes that

Fieldworkers have found they can safely approach human organizations by operating in a logical sequence, from the formal to the informal, in a reasonable fashion from the outside in. The rule of thumb might be: photograph first what the natives are most proud of (Collier, 1967, p.15).

Collier notes that this sends out a positive message to the locals-- that

I am interested in their achievements, not in critisizing them (Collier, 1967).

Moving from the general to the more specific, I will begin to photograph public examples of embroidery in use-- local styles of clothing, temple hangings, hangings above house doorways, animal trappings etc. I will also document street scenes, architectural details, and other examples of material culture.

Where ever possible and appropriate, I will utilize what Burgess calls "snowball sampling" (Burgess, 1982, p.77). This is simply a way of networking-- one informant is used to introduce another. By making my interests known to the people meet, casually or otherwise, I hope to be introduced to other people who might be helpful in carrying out my research. Prof. Morrell has indicated that Mr. Desai has useful many contacts that I may be able to take advantage of. I Similarly, I will ask known embroiderers to introduce me to others and so on.

Collier has noted the usefulness of having some sort of a role to play within the community (Collier, 1967, p.11). With a camera and a specific interest in embroidery, I hope to generate some impromptu interviews and gain access to more intimate, private settings. These interviews will be unstructured and geared to elicit the background information I require. As language may be a problem, especially in more rural areas, I will not attempt to interview on complicated issues like meaning. If an interpreter is needed and available, I will avoid interpretive or impressionistic questions unless that interpreter is known and reliable. Reimbursement for the services of an interpreter or guide will be negotiated in advance and with the advice of my contacts. I have

suggested, for example to Mr. Pires of the National Institute of Design, that I give a presentation on my textile art work to his classes in return for their assistance.

In the home, and providing the family members are willing, I will document the embroiderer, her technique, how embroidery is used domestically, and the overall appearance and lay out of the home. As well as providing a cultural inventory of the embroiderer's home, it may provide evidence of correlations between the embroidery and other material culture. Durrans (1982), for example, pointed out how weavers' homes in rural Gujarat reflect their craft.

Photography will be used to aid my documentation of embroidery. Collier notes the invaluable aid a camera gives in recording native technology (Collier, 1967, p.27). The camera can record with much more exactness than written notes, the details of a particular embroidery stitch. Similarly, the camera records details of the environment that might otherwise be overlooked. I will record, photographically, embroidery techniques, types, and styles and attempt to show them in use.

The resulting colour slides will be used in a later study to elicit detailed information from informants.

Apart from slides, the documentation will consist of extensive, detailed field notes. These will record my observations and notes regarding the embroiderers and their social organization. A separate record will note specifics about the slides while a journal will note my personal impressions and experiences as the research tool.

METHODS

THE INNER DRAMA OF FIELDWORK

The survey I am proposing will be based on non-probability opportunistic sampling. This form of survey conforms with my overall research intentions which are qualitative, not quantitative. Probability refers to the likeliness of something occurring, for example of it raining tomorrow. A random sampling method is one in which there is a equal possibility of being included in the sampled group, and is important to reduce bias in statistics. A non-probability sampling method is one in which the likeliness of being included in the sample is dependant on the researcher. A non-probability sample is one which is not random, but is oriented to the needs and aims of the ethnographer

Probability refers to the likeliness of something occurring, for example of it raining tomorrow. A random population sample is one in which there is a equal probability of any person being included. This is important in statistical analysis because it helps to reduce bias. A non-probability sample is one which is not random. It is biased according to the needs and aims of the ethnographer. He/she should not only exploit but make explicit this fact.

Informants selected by virtue of their status (age, sex, occupation) or previous experience, qualities which endow them with special knowledge that the ethnographer values, are chosen by a type of non-probability sampling best called judgement sampling. The ethnographer uses his prior knowledge of the universe to draw representatives from it who possess distinctive qualifications (Honigman, 1982, p.80).

This form of sampling necessitates a thorough knowledge of the field. Initially, I will be exercising judgement only in terms of my focus on

women domestic embroiderers. As the study proceeds however, I will develop more insight and criteria in this selection. As I acquire more knowledge of embroidery and Indian culture, I will be able to rely more heavily on judgement as opposed to opportunistic or chunk sampling. This latter form of non-probability sampling is less deliberate but well suited to my immediate needs and abilities. It implies,

that the researcher resourcefully seizes any handy chunk of the universe that promises to reward him (sic) with relevant information: he observes whatever children or mothers are available, visits receptive households, tests willing adults, records remarks he overhears or has volunteered to him, and attends almost any public meetings, church services and entertainments that he happens to hear about (Honigman, 1982, p.81).

As well as suiting my level of knowledge about Indian culture, social organization, and language, it is suited to the qualitative aims of this survey. Honigman notes that non-probability sampling gives satisfactory results for the ethnographer since he\she is interested in "the *system* of behaviour rather than the way behavioural traits or individuals with specific characteristics are distributed" (Honigman, 1982, p.83).

This form of sampling necessitates both noting the "significant dimensions of a person's status" (Honigman, 1982, p.82) as well as remaining keenly aware of one's surroundings. The "significant dimensions" of the embroiderers I will encounter will include their age, place or role in the family, the traditional or actual occupation of the family, religion, jati, hierarchical position within that jati, their relative wealth, ethnic group and language.

Burgess has said that the researcher is the main tool or instrument of social investigation (Burgess, 1982, p.1). As such he\she is intimately involved in the creation of ethnographic facts. The separation

between data and interpretation necessary to the objective stance of natural science is not possible. It is therefore critical that the instrument be both observant and perceptive.

Holy notes the problems an ethnographer faces in gaining access to a community. He\she is either a member of the community or not (Holy, 1990, p.33). In terms of the non-member, He notes,

The obvious predicament of the anthropologist is performative inadequacy, and the main problem to which anthropologist currently address themselves is how their inevitable incompetence in the native culture can be turned into a research tool...The anthropologist can take advantage of a performance inadequacy not by trying to accomplish the impossible task of becoming a member, but by systematically exploiting the fact that s/he is not a member and acting on the basis of his or her own cultural rules to find out to what extent they differ from those of the actors (Holy, 1990, p.32).

Holy is suggesting exploiting what is commonly called 'culture shock' to understand one culture relative to another.

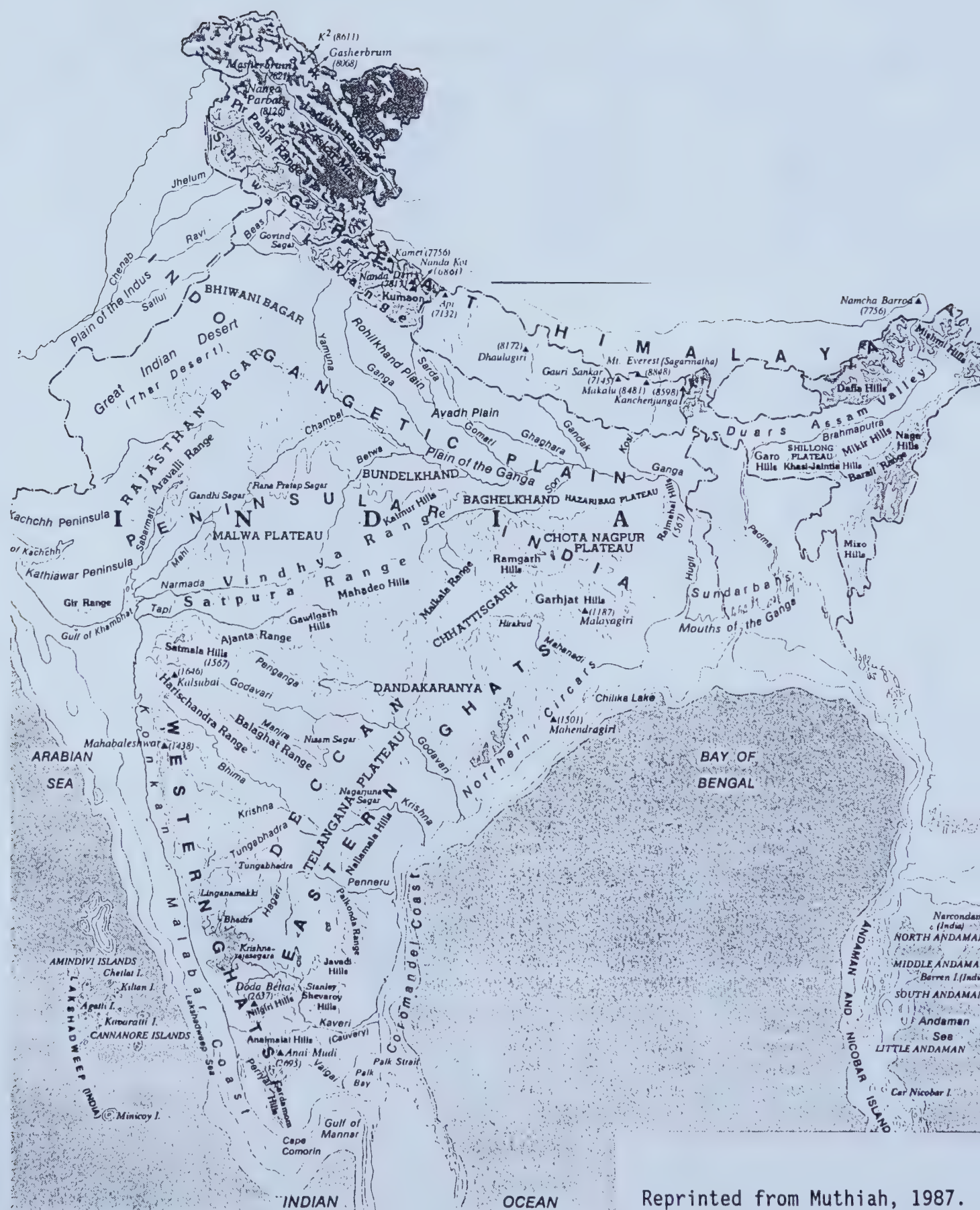
In conclusion, I would like to take a moment to consider a further dimension of the ethnographer as research tool. Research is more commonly concerned with what is 'out there' as opposed to what is going on 'in here' (Mooney, 1975). However, what is going on 'in here' has relevance for the research process and influences the analysis of data.

What Mooney refers to as the inner drama of research-- "the researcher's intimate experience with himself (sic) during his research activity" (Mooney, 1975, p.175), is important to be aware of. Just as the createdness of ethnography must be recognized, so too the source of creation. Mooney reminds us that it is important for the researcher to "accept one's self as a creative being" (Mooney, 1975, p.207). It is

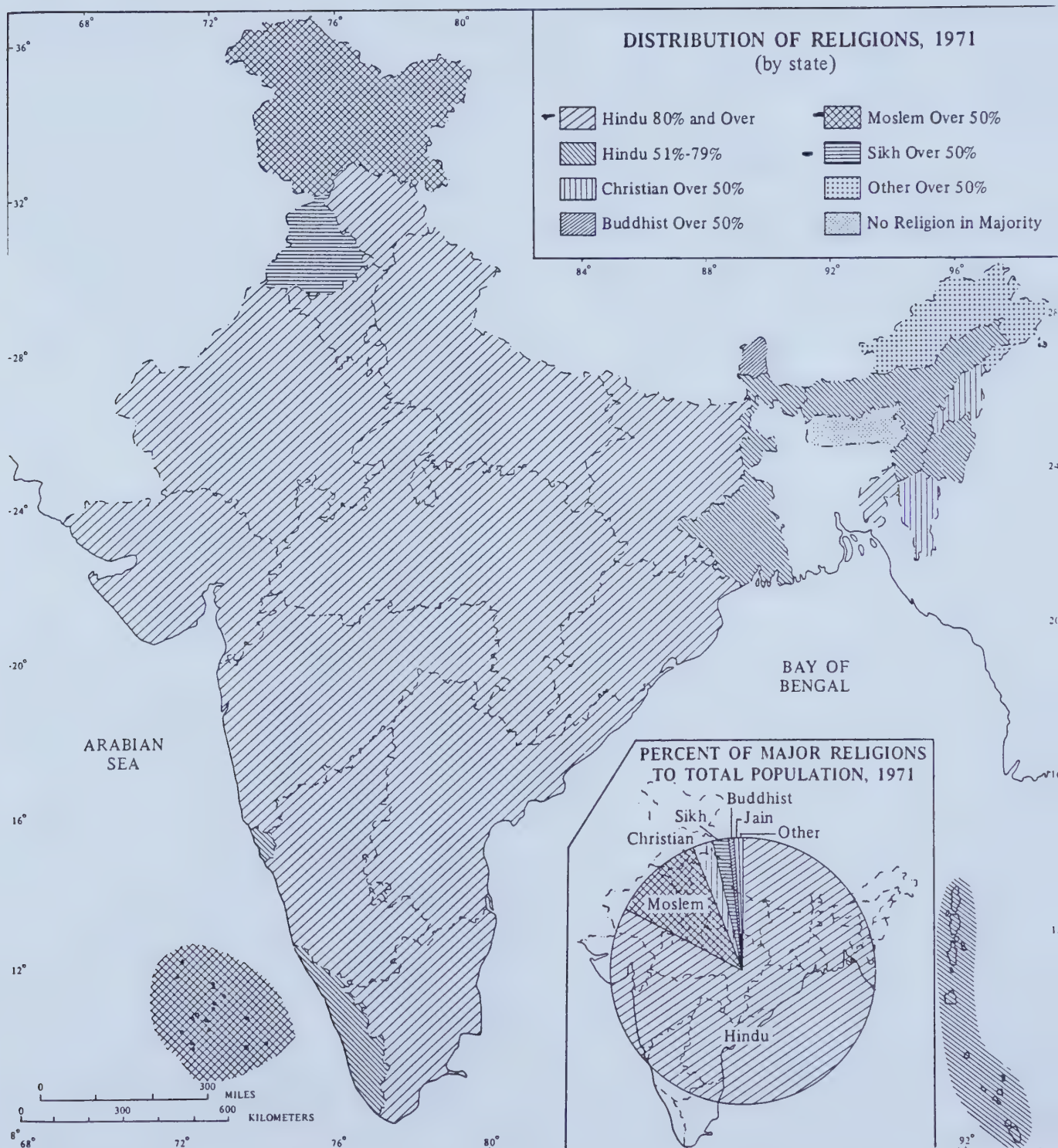
important therefore to be observant and perceptive of the pageant of events that surround me, as well as my inner development. It is important to develop an inner and outer eye and then realize that really they are the same. Ultimately it is important to accept myself as the centre of my experiential universe (Mooney, 1975).

I am thus proposing to study the domestic embroidery of Gujarat and Rajasthan through and with the women I encounter, the woman I am, and the woman I will become.

Appendix I

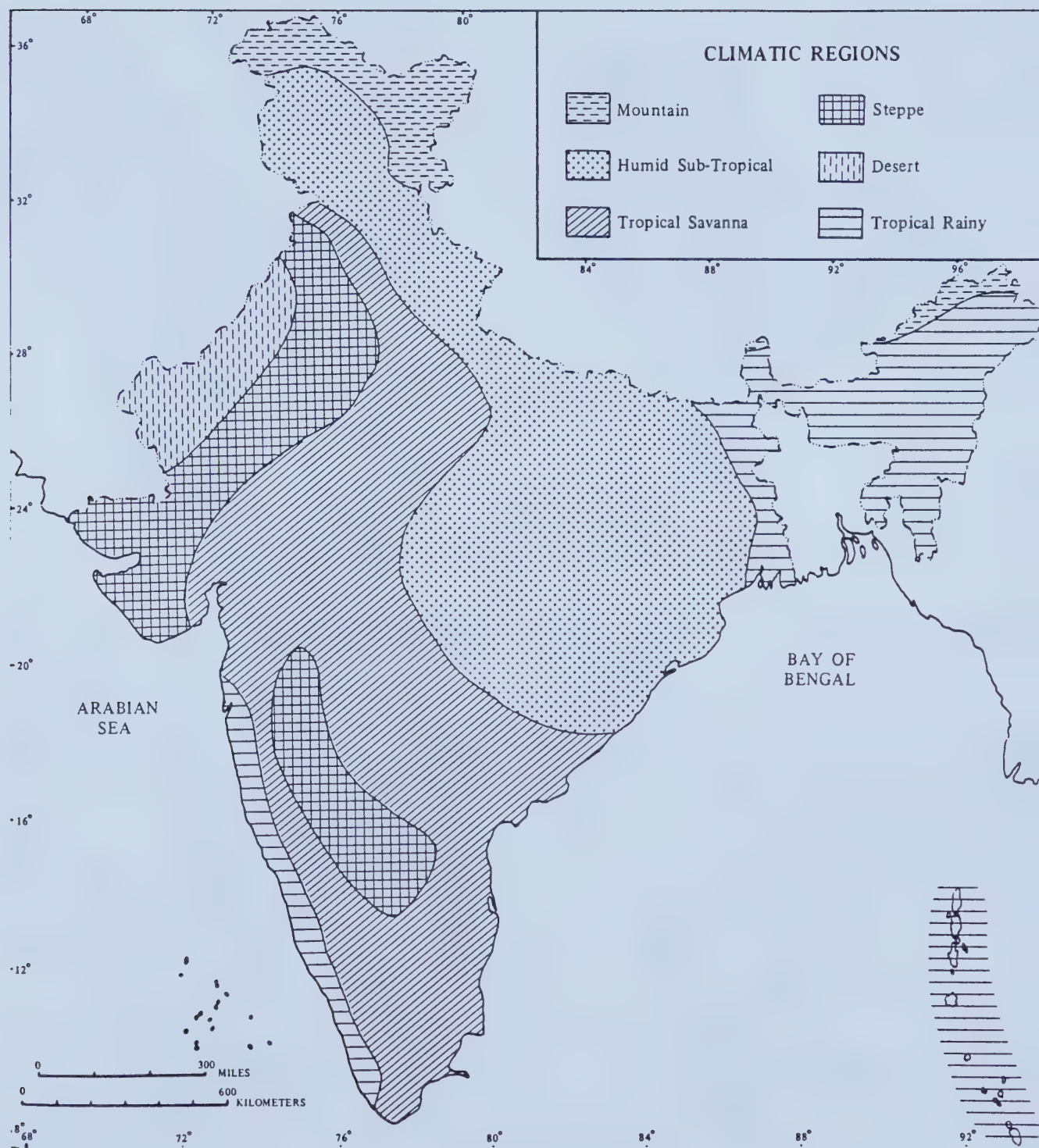


Appendix II



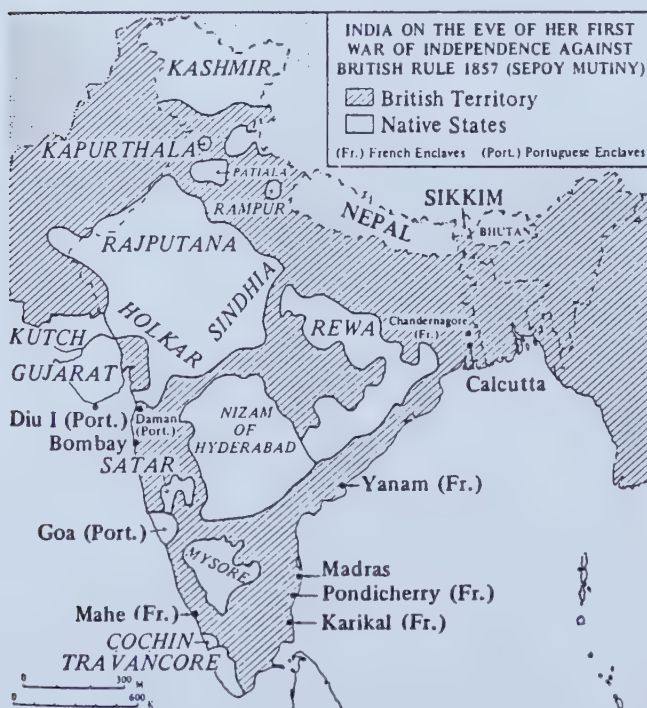
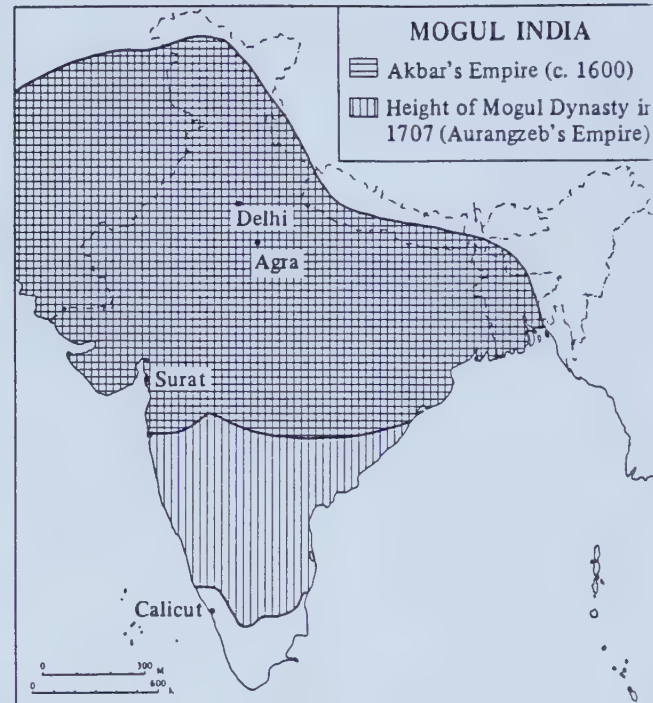
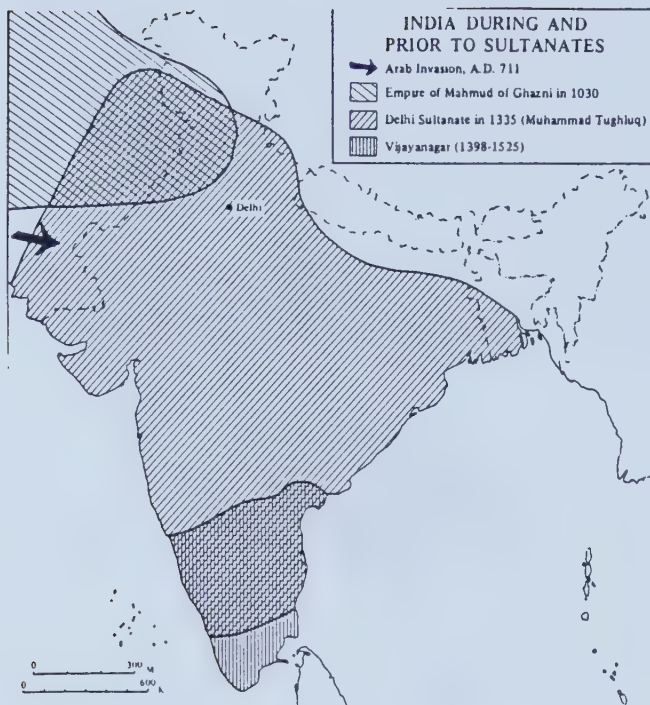
Reprinted from Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976.

Appendix III



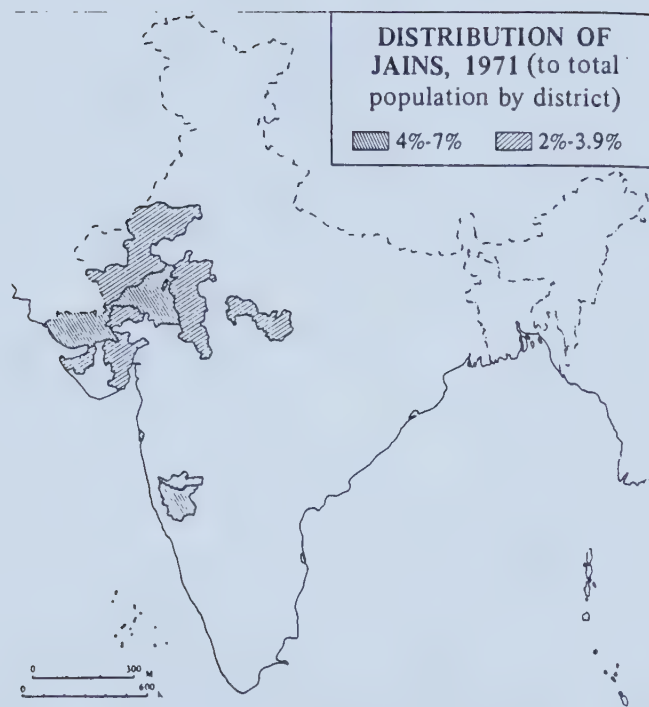
Reprinted from Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976.

Appendix IV



Reprinted from Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976.

Appendix V



Reprinted from Dutt, Chatterjee & Geib, 1976.

Appendix VI



Reprinted from Government of India, 1967.

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Corrections and Omissions

p.42 The "clam siphon debate"- see Levi-Strauss, 1985; and Harris, 1979.

p.43 Should read: (Sahlins, 1976, in McCracken, 1987, p.110)

p.50 (Code, 1991)

p.66 please note:

| | area (sq. km.) | population (1971 Census) |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Gujarat | 187,091 | 26,687,000 |
| Rajasthan | 342,267 | 25,724,000* |

*(Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974, p.288)

p.68 I will also be visiting the following museums: The Baroda Museum, Baroda, The Crafts Museum, New Delhi, The Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur, and the National Museum of India, New Delhi.

P.72 Please note the second paragraph should have been deleted.

The following should have been included in the Reference List:

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Harris, M. (1979). Cultural materialism. New York: Random House.

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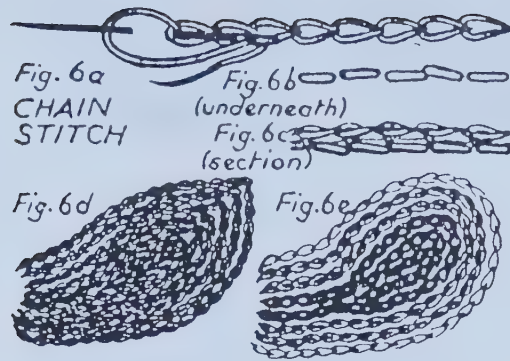
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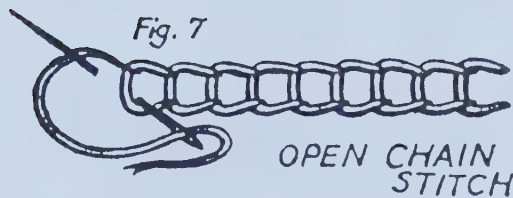
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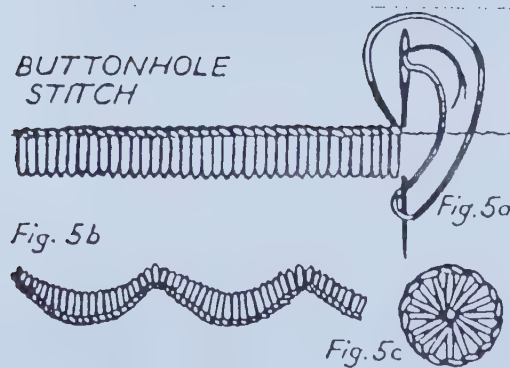




Chain Stitch



Open Chain Stitch



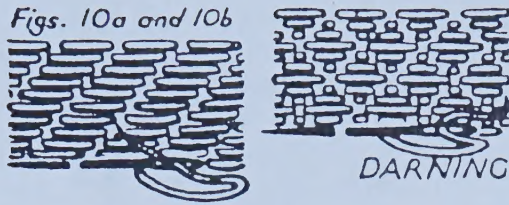
Buttonhole Stitch



Satin Stitch

All illustrations from Irwin & Hall, 1973

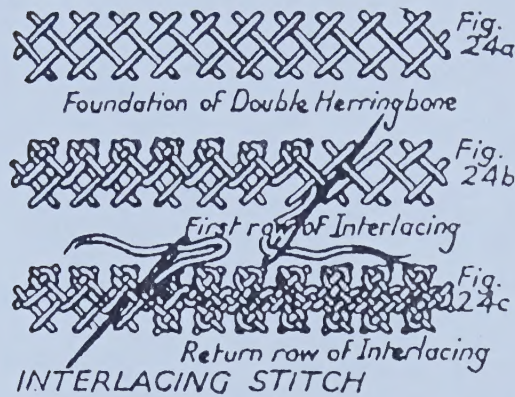
Figs. 10a and 10b



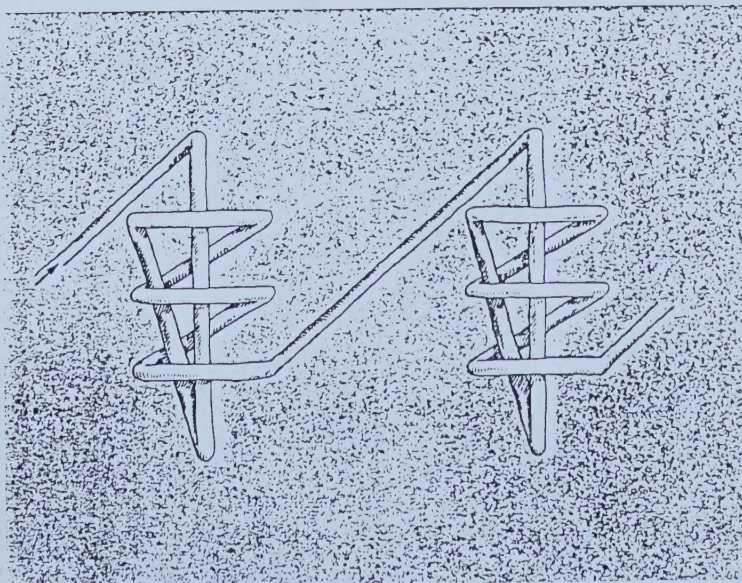
Darning Stitch



Herringbone Stitch



Interlacing Stitch



Vell Stitch*

All Illustrations from Irwin & Hall, 1973
except ⊕ Elson, 1979

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